SECTION I, NARRATIVE

CHAPTER IV

OPERATIONS FROM 1 DECEMBER TO 31 DECEMBER

171. On 1 December, General Orders Number 11 were published. They relate to Military Commissions for the trial of persons accused of espionage and similar offenses. (107)

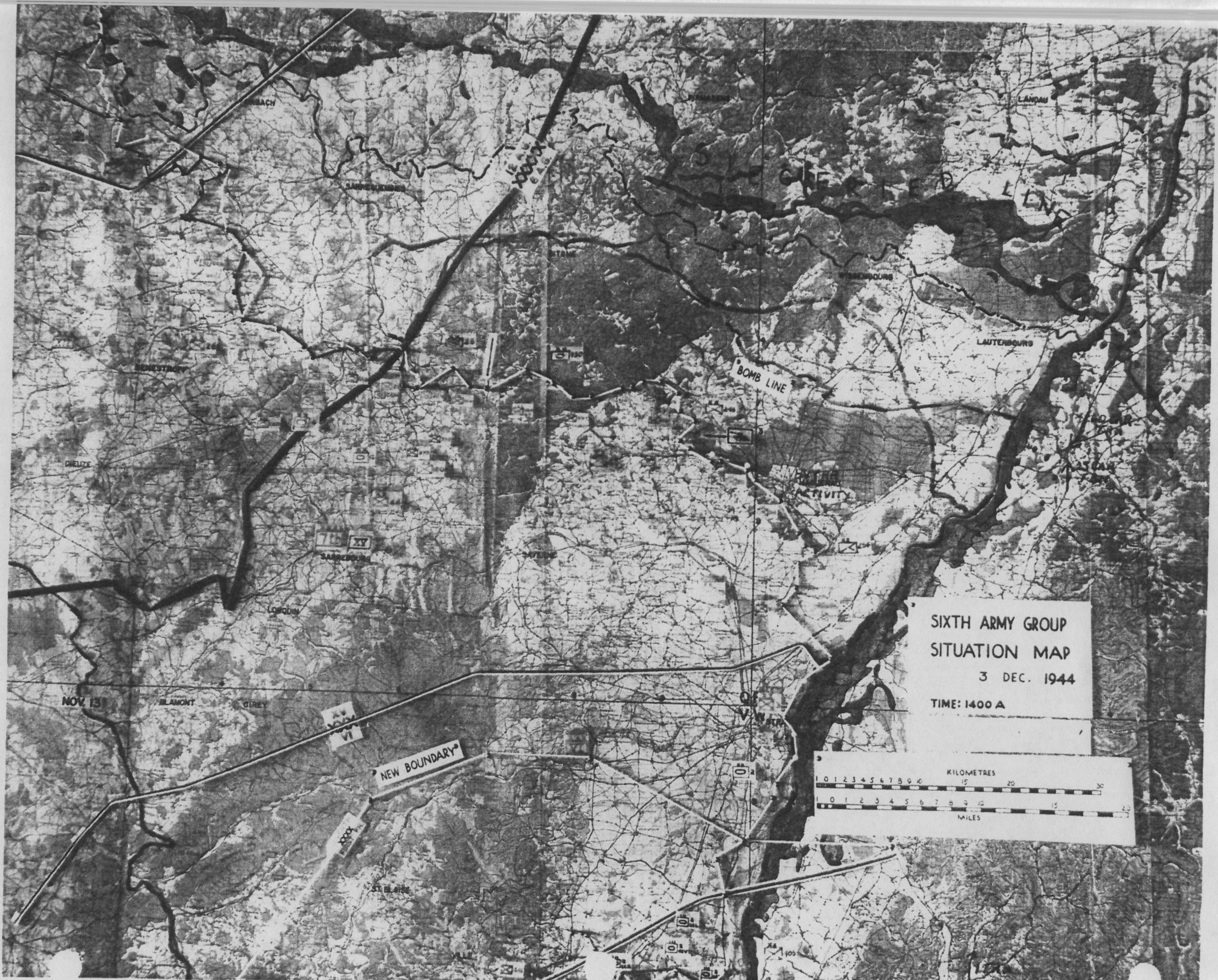
172. On this same date, with appropriate ceremony, General Devers presented an award of Legion of Merit to Master Sergeant Robert R. Jimerson, Company A, 53rd Signal Battalion. General Orders Number 12 were published and announced awards to two individuals of the Headquarters. (108)

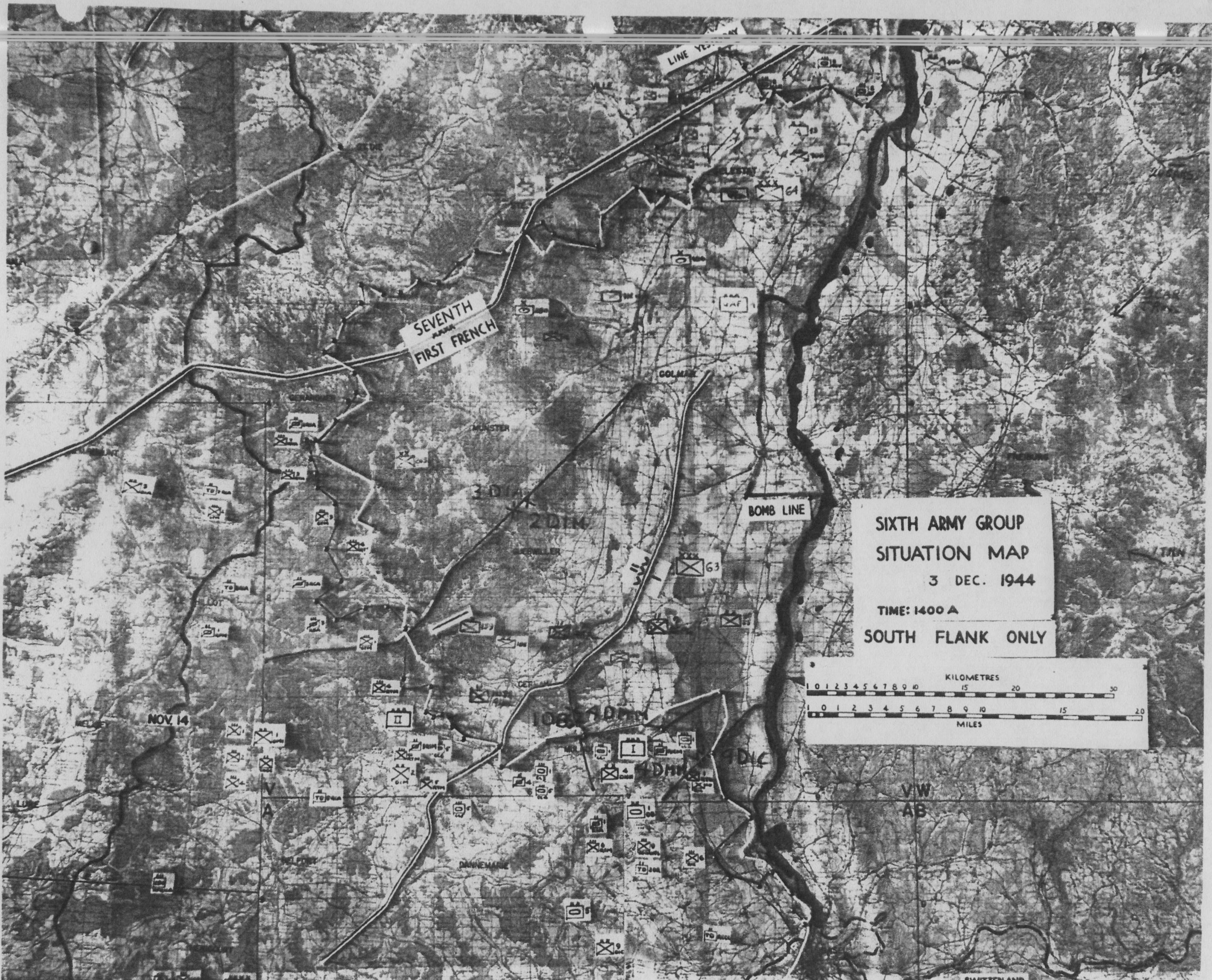
173. About this date there was received from the Quartermaster General a colored drawing of the shoulder sleeve insignia for the Sixth Army Group with description as follows:

> "On a 2$\frac{1}{4}$ inch red square a white fret placed diagonally consisting of six pieces, each 1 5/8 inches long by $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide."

The insignia had been in general use for some time.

174. Following a visit by Lieutenant Colonel Seaman (G-3 Plans) to Headquarters First French Army to arrange details, a letter was dispatched to that headquarters on 1 December enclosing an annex showing First French Army units to be included in the INDEPENDENCE troop list. Also shown was the date each unit was to be assembled and ready to move to the West. In addition to the 1st DMI and the 1st DB there were included 27 smaller combat and service units. Dates for movement ranged from 7 December to 31 December. (109) General de Lattre's reluctance to lose the 1st DB will be recalled. This matter had been satisfactorily adjusted by a sort of triple pass procedure. General de Lattre's loss was made good by gain of 2nd DB diverted Southward from Seventh Army zone. In turn, Seventh Army was assigned the 12th Armored Division from the Twelfth Army Group, and this loss was compensated by the assignment of an armored division en route to the theater. Notice of 12th Armored Division's transfer was received 28 November. In November an attempt was made to augment the Armored strength of the Sixth Army Group by requesting assignment of two tank battalions, Special, (Leaflet or CDL) and a Group Headquarters. These specially equipped battalions were not being used in the theater for their original purpose, and some 450 of the tanks were in storage in the United Kingdom and on the continent. The battalions themselves were being reorganized as normal type medium tank units. The Sixth Army Group informed ETOUSA that the tanks with their special equipment would be used, as originally intended, but, because the organic tanks of the two battalions, exclusive of specially equipped tanks, had already been used by the theater to equip another battalion, and be-


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
3 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
KILOMETRES
MILES
BOMB LINE
ACTIVITY
NEW BOUNDARY
NOV 13
LAUTERBOURG
LANDAU
SARREBOURG
SAVERNE
LORQUIN
BLAMONT
CIREY
ST. BLAISE



SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
3 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
SOUTH FLANK ONLY
KILOMETRES
MILES
SEVENTH
FIRST FRENCH
BOMB LINE
3 DIA
2 DIM
G3
G4
9 DIC
NOV. 14
COLMAR
MUNSTER
SWITZERLAND
DANNEMARIE
VW
AB

cause Sixth Army Group could not spare the 36 medium tanks needed to supply this deficiency the theater refused the Army Group's request.

175. On 2 December Letter of Instructions Number Four was published as quoted below:

HEADQUARTERS SIXTH ARMY GROUP

2 December 1944

SUBJECT: Letter of Instructions Number Four.

TO : CG, First French Army
CG, Seventh Army

1. a. See current intelligence summary.

b. Twelfth and Twenty-First Army Groups, no change.

2. Sixth Army Group continues the offensive as outlined in Letter of Instruction Number Three, with modifications as indicated herein.

Boundaries:

a. Between Twelfth and Sixth Army Groups: No change.

b. Between Seventh Army and First French Army:

West of CLERJUS (J-9837) no change - JARMENIL (V-1446) - BRUYERES (V-2557) - ST. DIE (V-4266) - GRANDFONTAINE (V-5789) - OBERHASLACH (V-7095) - MOLSHEIM (V-8294) - PLOBSHEIM (V-9986) - OFFENBURG (W-1686) all to First French Army; effedtive upon completion of the maneuver indicated in paragraph 3 a below.

c. South flank: No change.

3. a. Seventh Army:

(1) Capture SELESTAT (V-8063). Clear area North of SELESTAT and West of L'ILL RIVER by converging action of the 2nd French Armored Division and the 36th U.S. Infantry Division and pinch out all elements of 103rd Division and 14th Armored Division committed on this front no later than 1800 hours 3 December 1944. Notify Sixth Army Group when accomplished.

(2) Pass 2nd French Armored Division and 36th U.S. Infantry Division (with all its current attachments) to the operational control of Commanding General,

First French Army as soon as 103rd U.S. Infantry Division and elements of 14th U.S. Armored Division have been pinched out.

b. First French Army:

(1) Increase at once present efforts to destroy the enemy West of the RHINE by accelerating especially the advance of the North flank of the 3rd DIA and of the elements between MULHOUSE and the RHINE.

(2) Assume operational control of 2nd French Armored Division and of the 36th U.S. Infantry Division (with present attachments) promptly upon completion of the maneuver indicated in 3 a above. Thereafter, renew strong effort on this flank and complete the destruction of the enemy West of the RHINE in your zone of action.

x. (1) When pinched out, 103rd U.S. Infantry Division and elements of 14th U.S. Armored Division will be moved North of new boundary between Armies promptly.

(2) Details of passage of operational control of 2nd French Armored Division and 36th U.S. Infantry Division from Seventh Army to First French Army will be determined by Army Commanders at once.

(3) 2nd French Armored Division will remain a supply, maintenance and evacuation responsibility of Seventh Army until progress of operations permits First French Army to assume them, at which time the division will pass to full command of First French Army.

(4) 36th U.S. Infantry Division will remain a supply, maintenance and evacuation responsibility of Seventh Army. It will be employed by the First French Army in such a manner as will make the efficient discharge of these responsibilities by the Seventh Army feasible. This division will be returned to the operational control of Seventh Army by First French Army on orders of Sixth Army Group.

(5) Service installations of Seventh Army South of the new boundary between Armies will be moved North of the boundary without delay, except those required for the support of the 36th and 103rd U.S. Infantry Divisions and the 2nd French Armored Division which will be moved North of this boundary at the appropriate time.

(6) When operations permit First French Army to provide

troops made necessary thereby, the East end of boundary between Armies will be moved North to give STRASBOURG to First French Army.

(7) The imperative necessity for completing with the least possible delay the operations described herein cannot be over emphasized.

4. No change in administrative instructions.

5. No change in signal instructions.

By Command of Lieutenant General DEVERS:

DAVID G. BARR,
Major General, G.S.C.,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

/s/ REUBEN E. JENKINS
REUBEN E. JENKINS,
Brigadier General, G.S.C.,
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3.

176. The impact on the enemy of the twin attacks by Seventh and First French Armies during the latter half of November is indicated in the first paragraph of Weekly Intelligence Summary Number 11 dated 2 December:

1. GENERAL SUMMARY

The rapid advance of Seventh US Army and the reaching of the RHINE by the 2 French Armored Division in the STRASBOURG area on 23 November caught the enemy completely unaware, isolating the Nineteenth German Army in the VOSGES, thus dislocating the tactical cooperation between First and Nineteenth German Armies. Three Corps commanders were dismissed for their failure to deny us the access to the BELFORT and SAVERNE GAP. In addition to two annihilated divisions the enemy had to withdraw two more battered divisions, unable to provide sufficient replacements.

In the VOSGES the Nineteenth Army continued to fall back on the RHINE, offering stiff delaying action. The enemy endeavored to meet the emergencies by shifting depleted and tired units between the northern and southern VOSGES, without successfully establishing the required balance. It is noteworthy that he did not commit any new major unit in that area, probably considering such a commitment too risky in view of the hopeless tactical situation of his formations south of STRASBOURG.

In the HARDT Mountains, the First German Army, forced to withdraw two badly battered major units, continued to fall back on prepared positions.

In order to meet the emergency and to deny the approaches to the successive defenses of the MAGINOT and SIEGFRIED Lines, the enemy had to commit new units (four divisions).

177. On 2 December General de Lattre issued a personal letter of instructions to his troops urging that they surround and destroy the German forces in ALSACE and the VOSGES so that they would be unavailable for later use East of the RHINE.

178. On 3 December the Seventh Army passed the 2nd DB to operational control of First French Army and on 5 December control of the 36th Division was similarly passed.

179. Also on 3 December Administrative Instruction Number 6 was issued. It comprised five section as follows:

Storage and Issue of Ammunition by Lot Number.	I
Unit of Fire	II
Rehabilitation and Operation of Railways	III
Road Traffic Regulation and Control.	IV
Safeguarding Supplies in Transit and at Terminals. . .	V

(G-4 After Action Report, Doc)

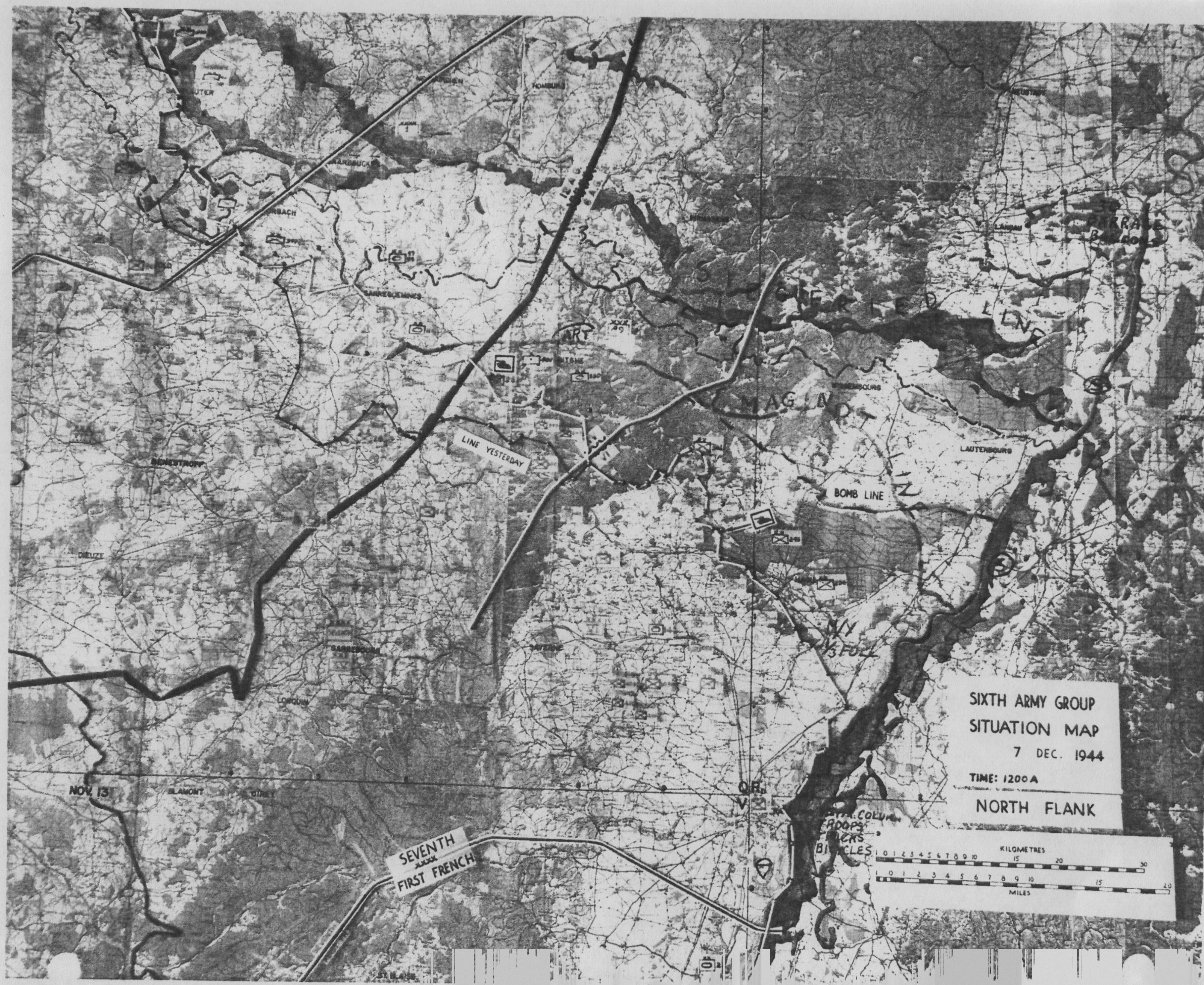
180. Also the rear boundary of the Combat Zone along the FRANCO-ITALIAN frontier was established effective 2 December. Since NICE was excluded, this resulted in passage of responsibility for Military Government in that city. About this time Sixth Army Group Headquarters became responsible for G-5 matters in the operational area of the Western French Forces. (110)

181. By early December it was evident that Seventh Army would shortly require a 3 Corps organization for control of the troops at its disposal for operations on its rapidly expanding front. Appropriate request was made on 4 December as follows:

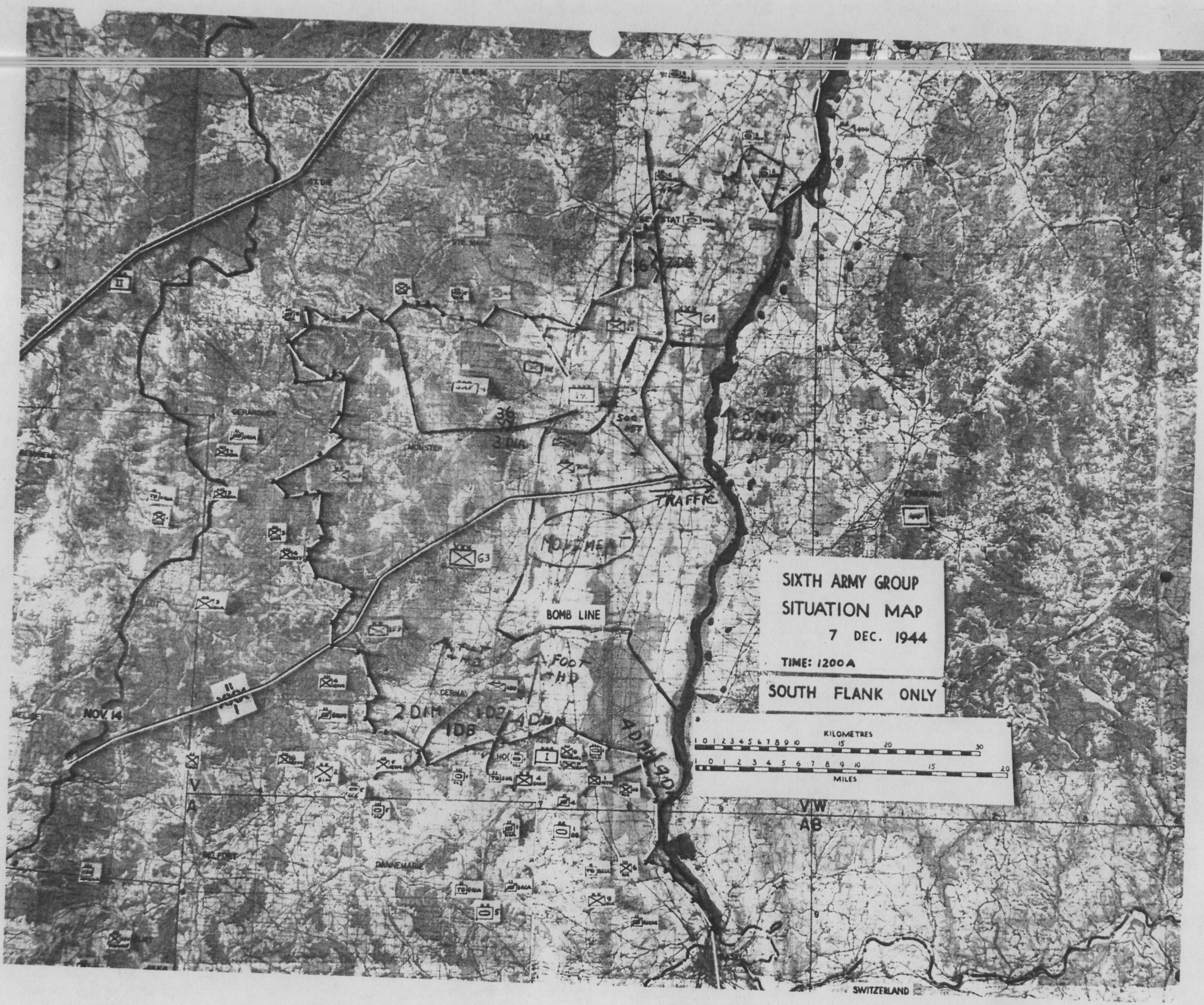
TO FOR ACTION: SHAEF MAIN

FROM : SIXTH ARMY GROUP 4 December 1944

Seventh Army operations against the SIEGFRIED Line will demand the full attention of the currently assigned two Corps HQ. Its east flank will be exposed for considerable depth along the RHINE during these operations. To meet this threat initially it is proposed to use Regiments drawn from those of the 42, 63 and 70 Divisions arriving in early December, or Regiments relieved from the line by them. Seventh Army will have 10 Infantry and 2 Armored Divisions with the arrival of the remainder of these Divisions in January. It will then be essential that Seventh Army have an additional Corps Headquarters. In the meantime, a suitable Headquarters with proper Communications facilities is immediately required to Command Units deployed along the exposed flank on the West bank of the RHINE. A Corps Headquarters with proper



SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
7 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1200A
NORTH FLANK
KILOMETRES
MILES
SEVENTH
FIRST FRENCH
LINE YESTERDAY
BOMB LINE
SIEGFRIED LINE
MAGINOT LIN
ART
VI
NOV. 13
DIEUZE
LAUTERBOURG


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
7 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1200A
SOUTH FLANK ONLY
KILOMETRES
MILES
BOMB LINE
TRAFFIC
MOVEMENT
2 DIM
1 DB
1 D2
4 DMM
4 DMM
9 D
FOOT
HD
36
3 DIA
NOV. 14
SWITZERLAND
DANNEMARIE
BELFORT
MUNSTER
CERNAY

Signal Units is highly desirable for this purpose. In addition it can be given extremely valuable experience of this duty prior to the time it is necessary for it to assume a more active role in January or February next year.

Therefore, in order that CG Seventh Army may more effectively perform his assigned mission, I urgently request that 1 additional Corps Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1 Corps Signal Battalion, 1 Headquarters and Headquarters Battery Corps Artillery, 1 MP Company Corps, and 1 Platoon QM Car Company be made available immediately.

It is realized that these Units will only partly meet our needs for additional troops, especially after the arrival of the 3 additional divisions. In the near future a letter presenting in detail the overall requirements of Seventh Army when composed of 3 Corps totalling 12 Divisions will be dispatched to you by a Staff Officer from this Headquarters.

182. On the morning of 6 December the following message was dispatched to the Commanding General First French Army:

Request you take prompt and energetic action on South flank. Strong indications that enemy on your front is on verge of total collapse.

/s/ DEVERS

183. On 8 December, with appropriate ceremony, General Devers presented the Bronze Star Medal to Major Erman M. Newman, G-4 Section, and the Purple Heart Medal to Private First Class Carl Macmahon, 251st Signal Heavy Construction Company. At the same ceremony General Barr presented the Air Medal with First and Second Oak Leaf Cluster to Captain Roy H. Sheehan, Army Air Forces, and the Air Medal with First Oak Leaf Cluster to Captain Albert S. Lawson, Army Air Forces. (111)

184. The first paragraph of Weekly Intelligence Summary Number 12, dated 9 December is quoted below:

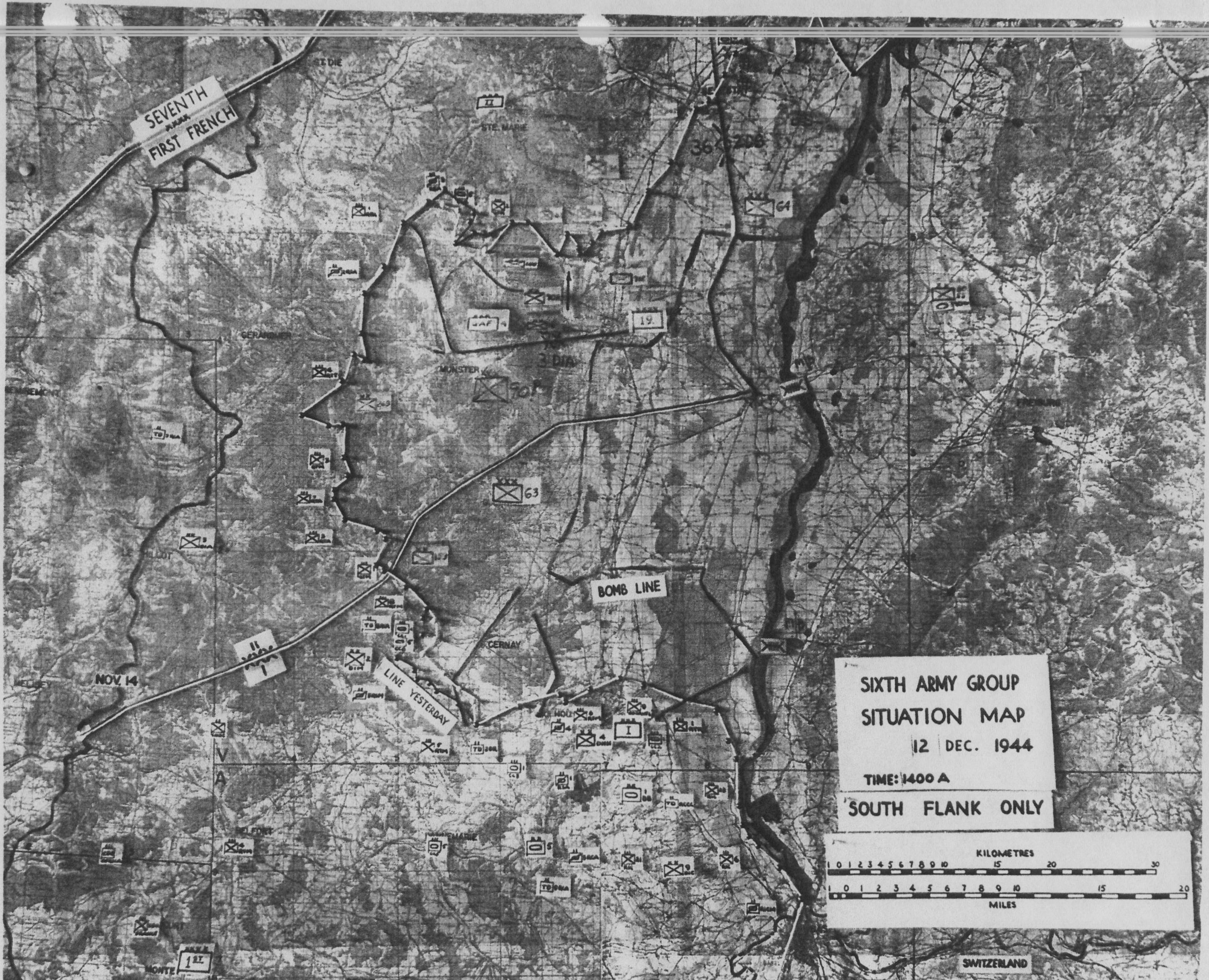
1. GENERAL SUMMARY

The enemy continued to oppose the advance of the First French French Army in the VOSGES pocket with one major unit and remnants of three major units organized in Battle-groups. The constant flow of infantry and vehicular columns over the RHINE indicates the enemy's intention eventually to withdraw his troops from the ALSACE Plain. On the Northern front (HARDT Mountains) the enemy is fighting a delaying action withdrawing slowly towards the consecutive positions of the MAGINOT and SIEGFRIED Lines.

185. Due to increasing danger from espionage and sabotage, General Devers on 9 December took action to insure that prompt and periodic warning should reach all members of his command. (112)



SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
12 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
NORTH FLANK
KILOMETRES
MILES
ZWEIBRUCKEN
SIEGFRIED LINE
MAGINOT
LINE YESTERDAY
BOMB LINE
LAUTERBOURG
SEVENTH
FIRST FRENCH
NOV. 13


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
12 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
SOUTH FLANK ONLY
KILOMETRES
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 15 20 30
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 15 20
MILES
SEVENTH
FIRST FRENCH
BOMB LINE
LINE YESTERDAY
NOV. 14
ST. DIE
STE. MARIE
GERARDMER
MUNSTER
CERNAY
BELFORT
FREIBURG
SWITZERLAND
63
64
19
3 DIA
36
1ST
I
II

186. On 9 December SHAEF directed movement of the three infantry regiments of the 70th Infantry Division which had arrived in the MARSEILLES area. Although General Devers had previously accepted the liability of processing these units through the crowded port of MARSEILLES with the understanding that they would be assigned to his command,* SHAEF now directed that the regiments be moved to the Third Army area for assignment to Twelfth Army Group.

187. Also on 9 December, notification was received that Colonel Lenzner, Signal Officer, had been appointed to the grade of Brigadier General, with date of rank from 14 November. (113)

188. In the early days of December General Devers was anxious to move his command post forward but facilities were extremely limited and were almost completely occupied by essential installations of Seventh Army and by hospitals. The supply, transportation and use of adequate tentage would present many serious problems. The use of a small Advance Detachment was the best solution and on 10 December instructions were issued covering the movement of the detachment 11-13 December and the opening of the Advance CP at 0001A hours 14 December at PHALSBOURG, a small town about 8 kilometers West of SAVERNE. The use of the Advance CP saved about three hours motor travel to and from Seventh Army and the Northern portion of the First French Army zone (114)

189. This was the first time that the headquarters had been forced to operate in two echelons. The general plan of division is indicated in the following message:

TO FOR ACTION: SHAEF MAIN AND OTHERS

FROM : SIXTH ARMY GROUP 11 December 1944

Sixth Army Group Advance is moving to PHALSBOURG (Q-6519) and will open 0001A hours 14 Dec 1944 in that location. Sixth Army Group Rear will not move from VITTEL.

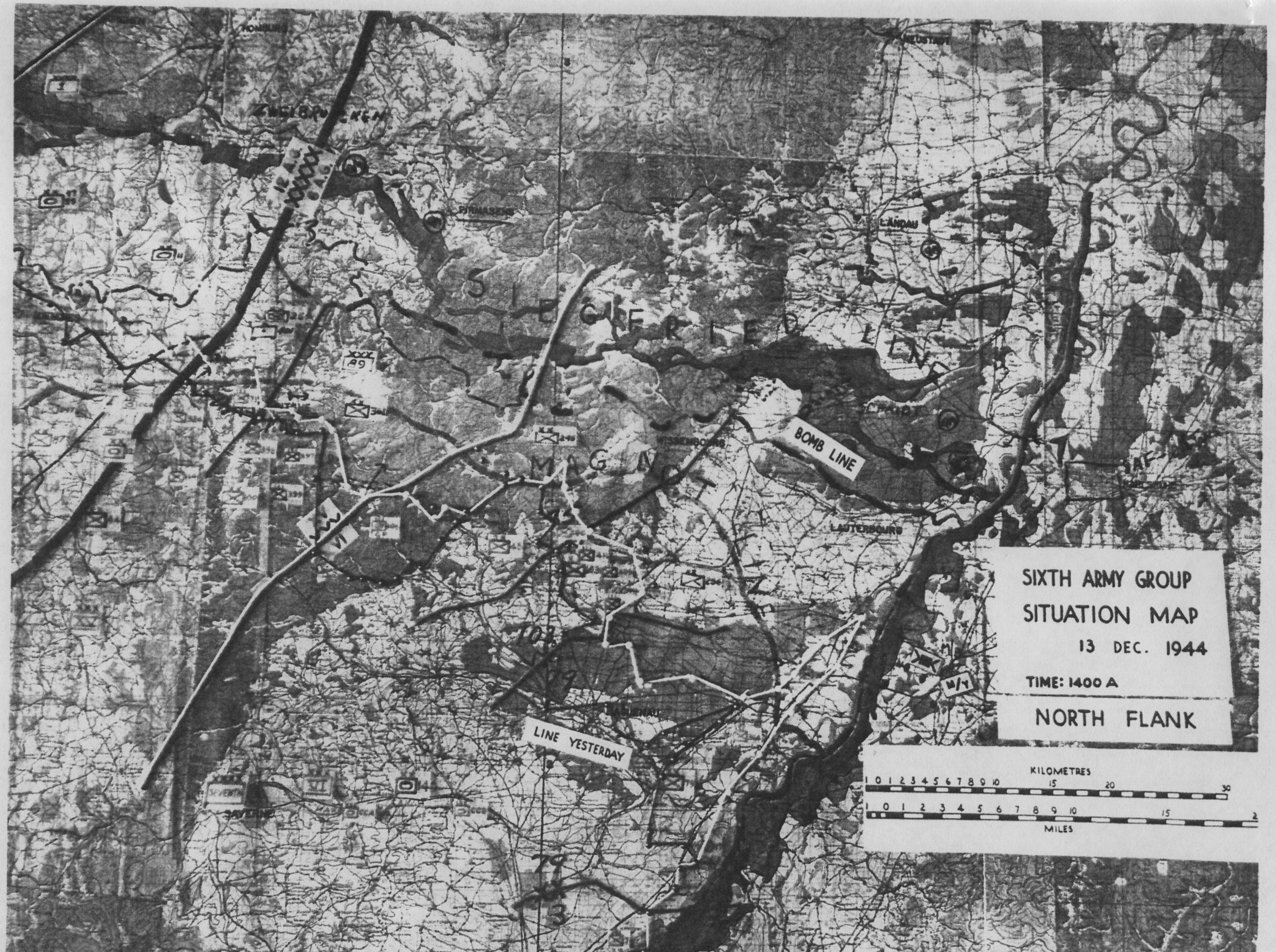
Sixth Army Group Advance will consist of the Army Group Commander, Chief of Staff, AC of S G-2 and AC of S G-3.

G-2 will consist of the executive and operational elements with liaison personnel from signal-intelligence and counter-intelligence. OSS and Technical intelligence will remain at Rear Headquarters.

G-3 will move to Advance. Minimum G-3 personnel including G-Air and A Force will remain at rear.

Signals, Engineer, Psychological Warfare, PRO, AG, IG, JAG, G-1, G-4, G-5 will remain at Rear with minimum liaison and opera-

*See Chapter II, paragraphs 109 and 110.


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
13 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
NORTH FLANK
KILOMETRES
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 15 20 30
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 15
MILES
BOMB LINE
LINE YESTERDAY
SIEGFRIED LINE
MAGINOT
LAUTERBOURG
LANDAU
SAVERNE

tions personnel at Advance.

French Military Mission will be represented at the Advance, but the executive office will remain at Rear.

First TACAF (Prov) will establish at PHALSBOURG simultaneously.

Only messages requiring personal attention of Army Group Commander or Chief of Staff and all messages for action or information to G-2 and G-3 should be addressed to Advance in addition to Rear effective 0001A hours 14 Dec 1944.

In general all other communications should be addressed to Rear, except those in the foregoing categories.

Please notify all concerned.

The movement of the Advance echelon and the subsequent operation in two echelons placed an added burden on most sections of the headquarters particularly the AG and Signals. The use of the van installations and the foresight to have reserve equipment immediately available saved the day for signal communications.*

190. On 14 December announcement was made of the appointment of Lieutenant Colonel Edouard du Souzy as Chief of the French Mission, this Headquarters, vice General Rene de Hesdin relieved. (115)

191. Also on 14 December announcement was made of the appointment of Colonel Hubert W. Collins, CE, as Acting Engineer, this Headquarters effective 12 December 1944, during the absence of Brigadier General Henry C. Wolfe, USA. (116)

192. On the same day the following message was received from SHAEF:

FROM: SHAEF MAIN

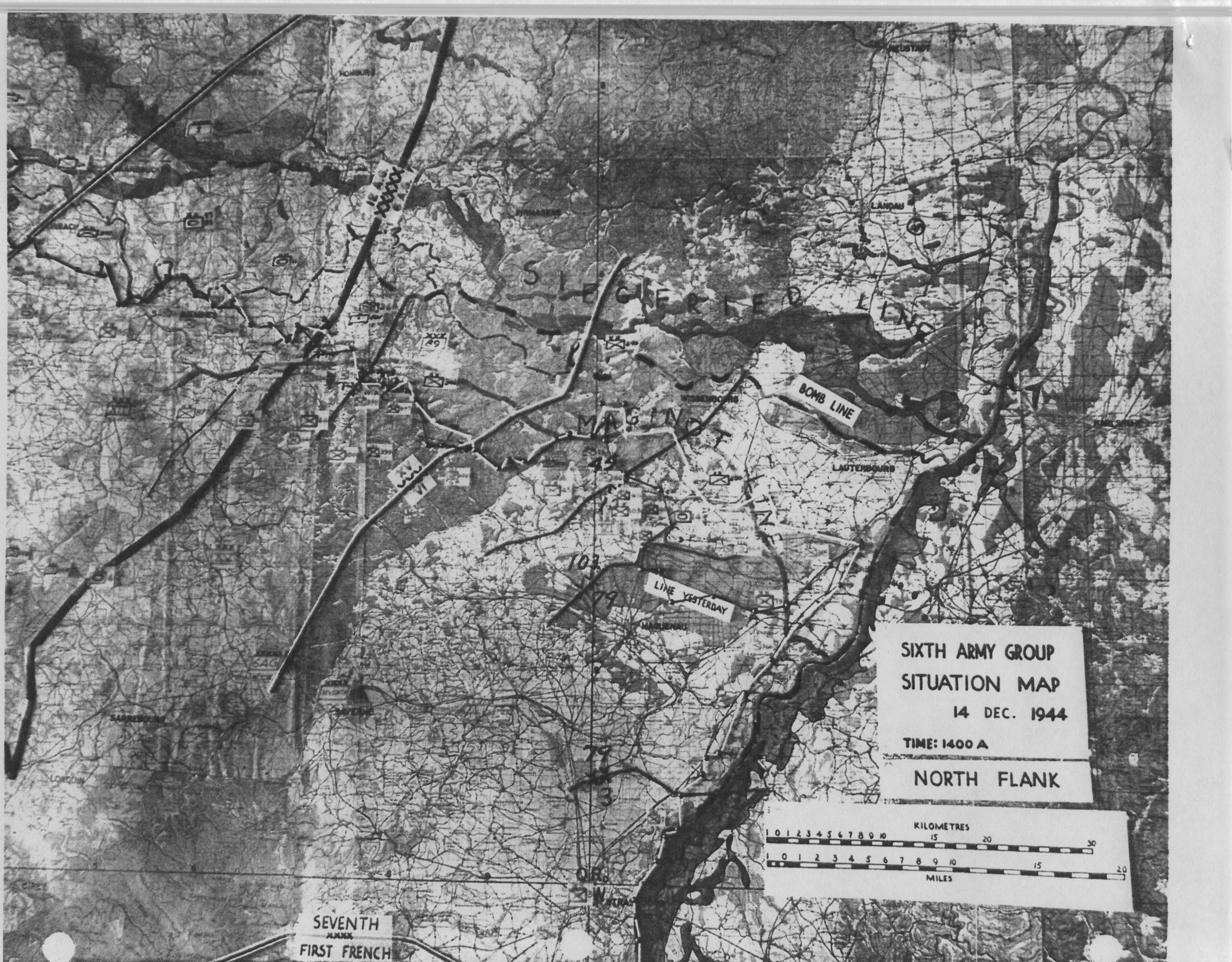
TO : SIXTH ARMY GROUP 14 December 1944

From all indications the enemy is sending replacement personnel for his Divisions in the COLMAR Bridgehead and intends to hold it. You should regard elimination of this Bridgehead, which is now occupying 8 of our Divisions, of great importance.

You are authorized to postpone INDEPENDENCE if forces earmarked for INDEPENDENCE are necessary to ensure prompt liquidation of COLMAR Bridgehead.

Report action proposed.

*See Chapter II, paragraph 71 and accompanying photos.


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
14 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
NORTH FLANK
KILOMETRES
MILES
SIEGFRIED LINE
MAGINOT LINE
BOMB LINE
LINE YESTERDAY
SEVENTH
XXXX
FIRST FRENCH
LANDAU
LAUTERBOURG

Factors in addition to enemy reinforcement contributing to the virtual stalemate on the First French Army front were the extensive flooded areas, and the depletion of French units. Replacements were difficult to obtain and many companies were down to a strength of about one platoon.* Movement orders for the 1st DB were cancelled. Reply to the SHAEF message follows:

TO FOR ACTION: SHAEF MAIN

FROM : SIXTH ARMY GROUP ADV 14 December 1944

1. Your views expressed in message of 14 Dec (not to ETOUSA) are appreciated. A few service elements and 1 DMI have already departed from this area. The 1 DMI has been roughly handled in current operations and is in serious need of time for retraining and refitting which is intended to be accomplished in the AGOULEME area. This Division could not be made battle fit in time to take decisive part in the current operations against the bridgehead. 1 DB, Medium and Heavy Artillery elements and other important combat supporting troops have not departed and their movement has been definitely suspended by me. They have been immediately returned to the operational control of Commanding General, First French Army for employment.

2. In order to facilitate operations against the bridgehead I yesterday ordered the immediate relief of the 36 Inf Div by the 3 Inf Div. This relief has already started. The 36 Inf Div has been constantly in the line since 15 August and in addition has been badly shaken by heavy German counter attacks during the last 3 days. This Division's condition has been thoroughly investigated by me and I am convinced that it will not be ready for offensive battle before early January.

3. Seventh Army operations towards the north are currently making rapid progress. At a conference with Army and Corps Commanders this morning all expressed supreme confidence in their ability to breach the Siegfried line with their currently available troops within a very short time. All agreed however that for the moment their most urgent and compelling need was fresh troops with which to exploit the breach. I agree whole-heartedly with their views. In this connection it is my duty to point out to you that all of the Seventh Army Divisions have been carrying on the current battle at top speed for 32 days. In order to enable them to continue, it is absolutely imperative that replacements be made available as needed.

4. I have the utmost confidence that we will break through the Siegfried line on the front of the Seventh Army shortly. To sustain our advance 2 additional Inf Divs, in addition to the 42 and 63 Inf Divs, should be made available to me at once. The 42

*G-3 briefing and Liaison Officers.

and 63 Inf Divs will not be ready for offensive combat until February 1. They will be trained in defensive combat on my open flank along the RHINE and on protection of my line of communications for which they are absolutely essential.

5. In order that my plans may proceed, a decision is requested as a matter of urgency.

193. Favorable reply was received on 14 December. It is paraphrased as follows:

FROM: SHAEF

TO : SIXTH ARMY GROUP 13 December 1944

Necessary action will be taken by CG, ETO to transfer the HQ and HQ CO, XXI Corps, and the following units as designated by CG, ETO, to Sixth Army Group at the earliest practicable date:

one HQ and HQ battery, Corps
one Signal Battalion, Corps
one MP CO, Corps
one platoon QM Car CO

Equipping of units will not interfere with equipment of Infantry Divisions.

As soon as the equipping of units has been completed, CG, ETO, will move the above mentioned units to arrive in area designated by CG, Sixth Army Group.

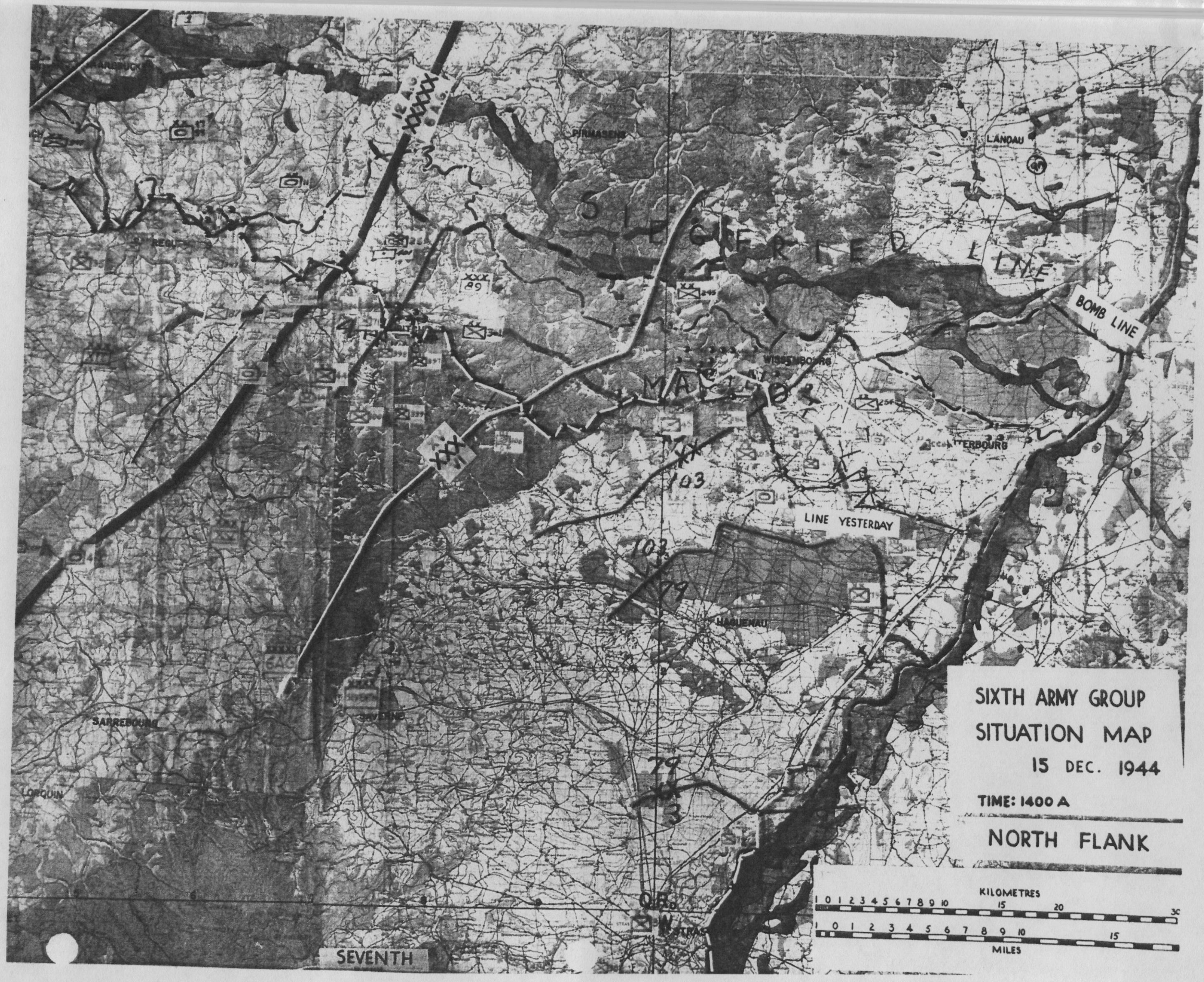
Direct communication between headquarters concerned is authorized. SHAEF to receive information copies of all correspondence concerning transfer. Upon completion of movement of the above mentioned units, report will be made to this headquarters.

194. By 16 December substantial crossings of the German border had been made by VI Corps. Text of the "Redline" radio dispatch to General Eisenhower on that date is paraphrased below:

The VI Corps advance has carried elements of 3 of its Divisions across the German frontier. Crossing points of the 45 were at R0750 and R0850. 2 Bn of the 315 Inf of the 79 Div crossed at R3431 and the 411 Inf from the 103 Div crossed the border at R0949.

79 Div is mopping up in LAUTERBOURG (R-3232) and has cleared NIEDERLAUTERBACH (R-2641) and SCHIEBENHARD (R-2942).

14 Armd Div cleared SCHLEITHAL (R-2243) and SALMBACH (R-2442). Other elements of this division have reached points less than 2 miles from WISSEMBOURG and are at R-1446 and R-1746. The opposi-



SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
15 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
NORTH FLANK
KILOMETRES
MILES
SIEGFRIED LINE
BOMB LINE
LINE YESTERDAY
LANDAU
PIRMASENS
WISSEMBOURG
HAGUENAU
SARREBOURG
SAVERNE
LORQUIN
SEVENTH

tion encountered by the VI Corps appears to be outposts of the Siegfried defenses. The enemy will probably defend along the LAUTER River where reports indicate all bridges have been blown.

Advance of the XV Corps' continues to be slow in the BITCHE vicinity where strong opposition is being encountered. Corps reconnaissance elements on the right flank have advanced up to 3 miles to occupy positions in the Foret BANNSTEIN.

In the COLMAR Pocket the attack of the 36 Div went off on schedule; however, advances have been slow, but the 30 Inf has advanced 1 mile to occupy the high ground in vicinity of V-6550. On the South flank of the First French Army there has been no change.

195. In order to explain and coordinate the functions of Technical Intelligence teams furnished by ETOUSA, Intelligence Directive Number 5 was published by Headquarters Sixth Army Group on 16 December. Its first two paragraphs are quoted below:

<u>USE OF TECHNICAL INTELLIGENCE TEAMS</u>

1. <u>Function of Technical Intelligence Teams</u>

   a. To provide all Services and Formations concerned with the capabilities, characteristics, and methods of operation and neutralization of enemy equipment in use or likely to be used in the area of this command.

   b. To provide higher echelons with technical reports and specimens of equipment.

   c. To facilitate the prompt development of counter-weapons and counter-tactics.

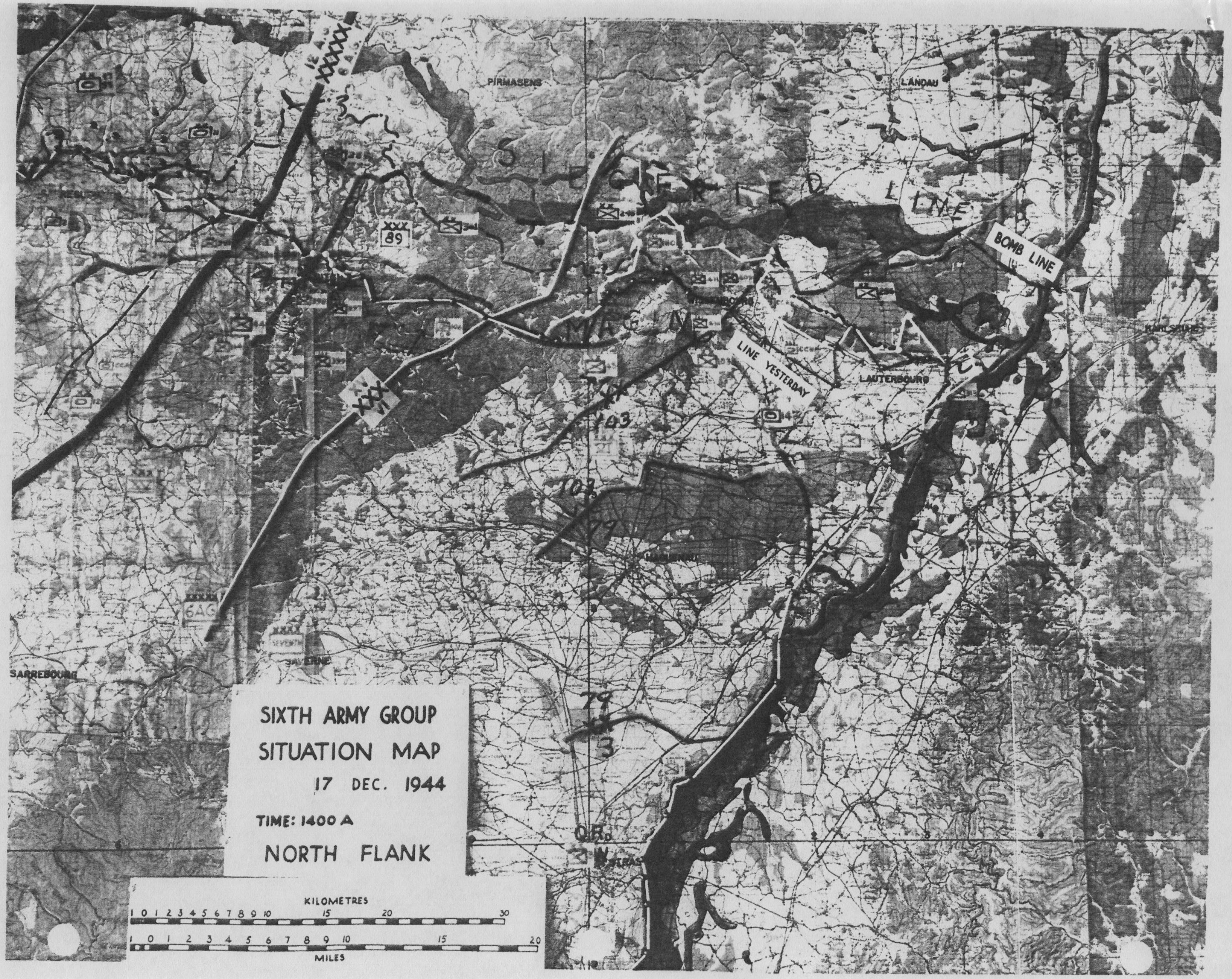
2. <u>Organization</u>

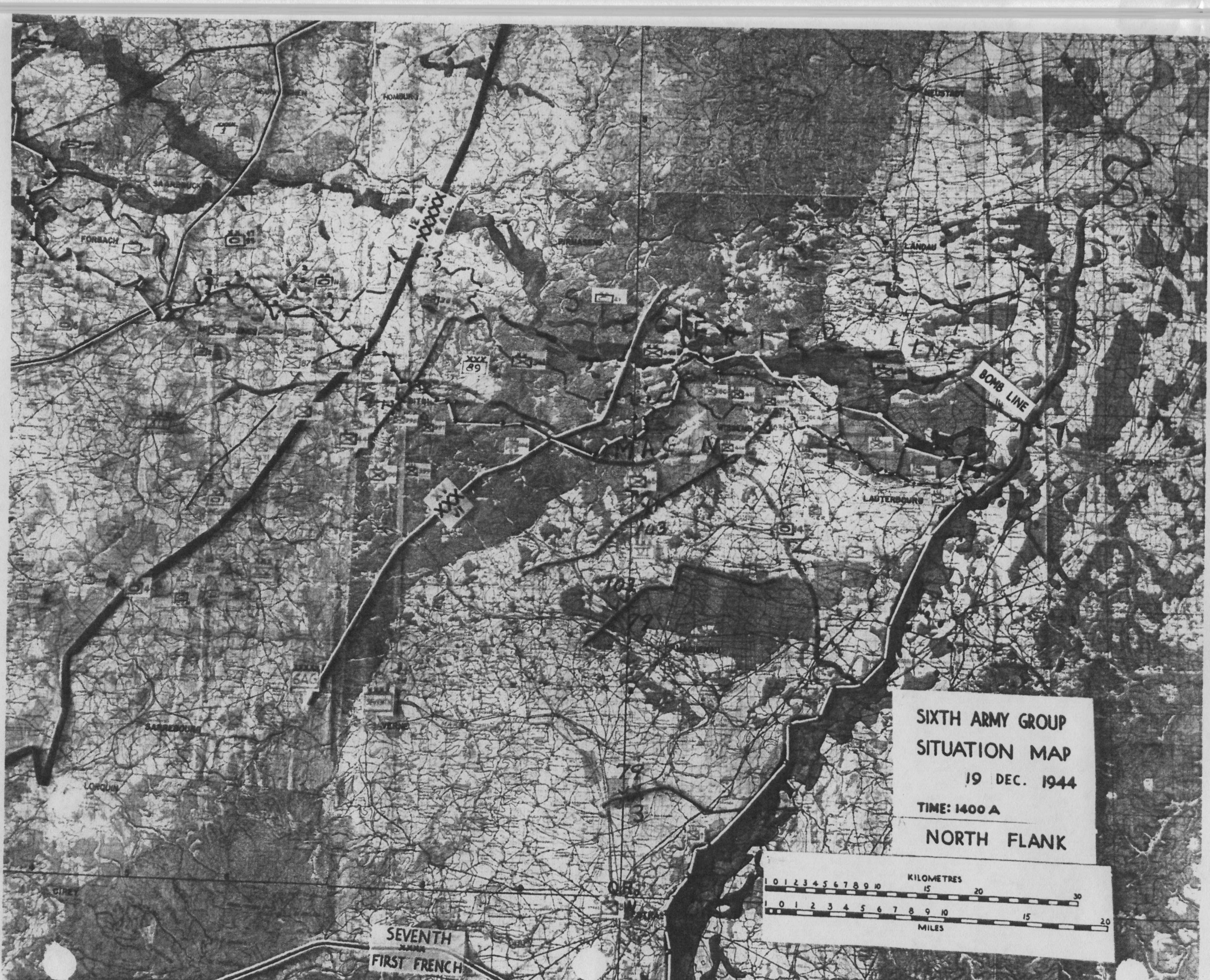
   a. Each service section of ETOUSA will provide personnel, equipment and transportation for these teams, which will be attached to Army or Army Group headquarters. Technical Intelligence teams will supplement, <u>not</u> supplant, organic service personnel and will operate under control of the chief of service at the headquarters concerned. Close coordination will be effected, however, with Intelligence Sections.*

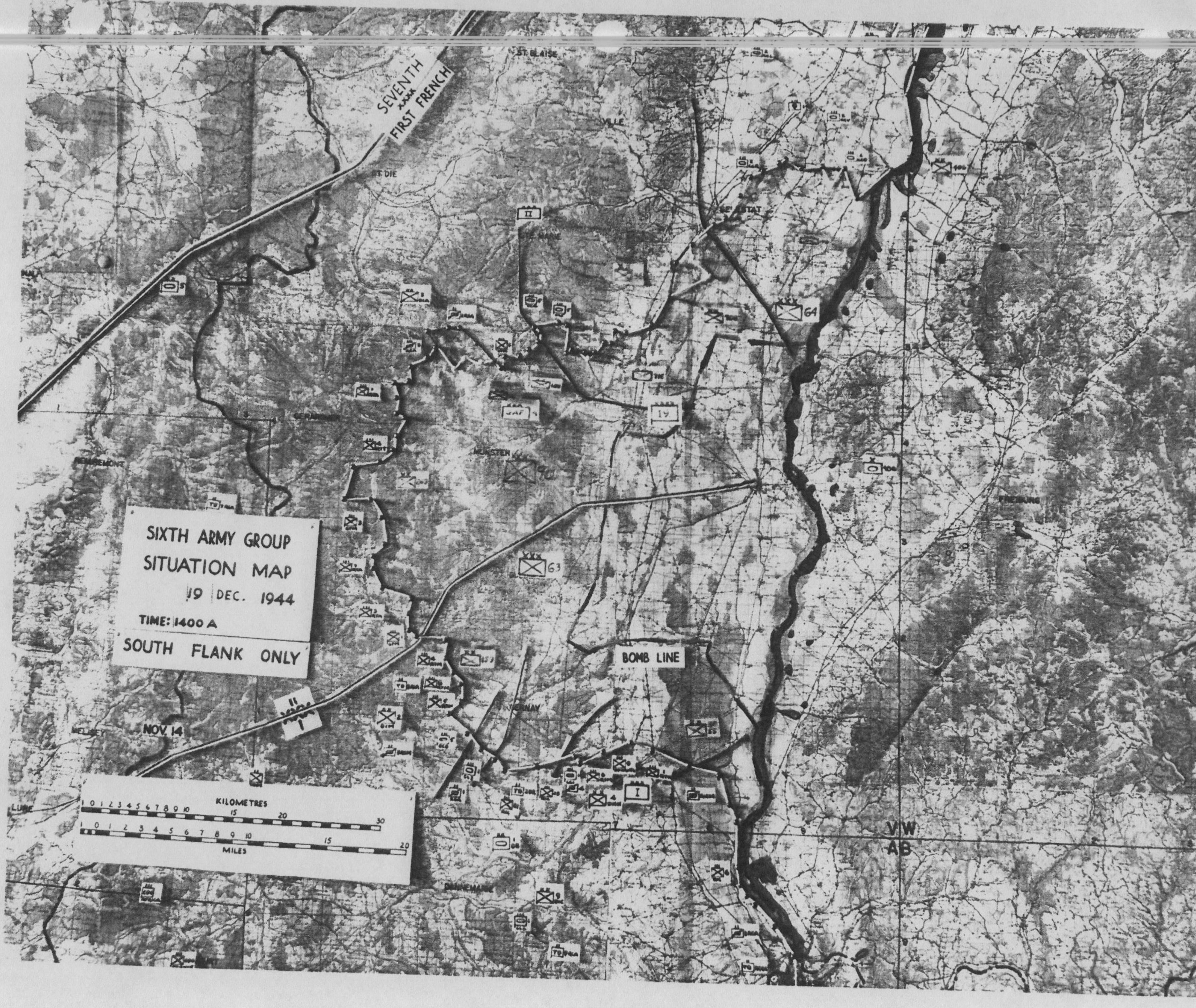
196. On 17 December the VI Corps contacted forward positions of the SIEGFRIED Line meeting greatly increased resistance. (DR 17 Dec)**

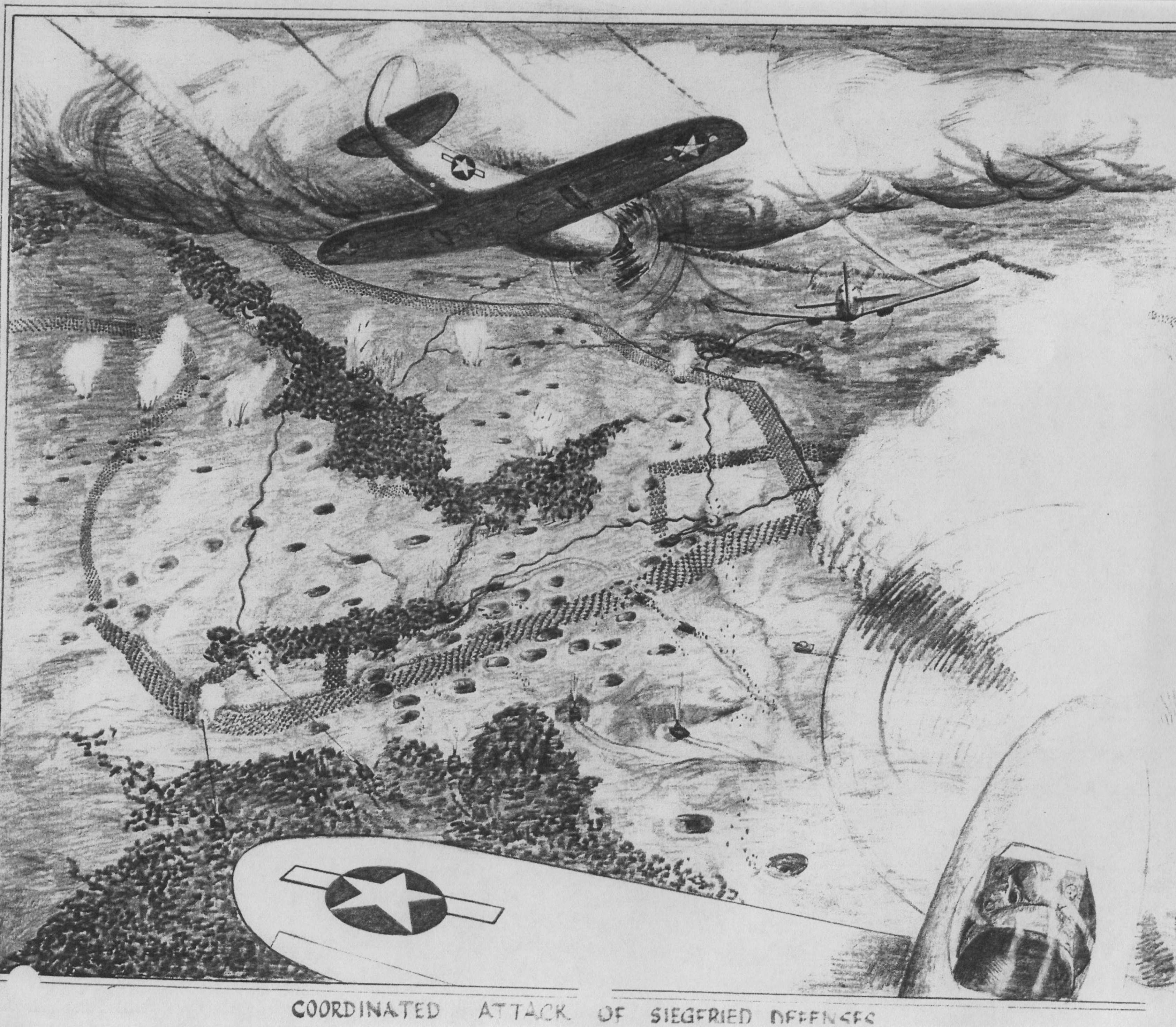
*For the complete directive of 4 pages see the G-2 After Action Report for December.

**DR-Daily Redline dispatch, General Devers to General Eisenhower.


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
17 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
NORTH FLANK
KILOMETRES
MILES
BOMB LINE
LINE YESTERDAY
SIEGFRIED LINE
PIRMASENS
LANDAU
LAUTERBOURG
SARREBOURG
XXX 89
143
103
79


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
19 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
NORTH FLANK
KILOMETRES
MILES
BOMB LINE
SEVENTH
FIRST FRENCH
HOMBURG
FORBACH
PIRMASENS
LANDAU
NEUSTADT
LAUTERBOURG
SARREBOURG
LORQUIN
CIREY


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
19 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
SOUTH FLANK ONLY
SEVENTH
FIRST FRENCH
BOMB LINE
NOV. 14
KILOMETRES
MILES
VW
AB
64
63
I
II



COORDINATED ATTACK OF SIEGFRIED DEFENSES

197. After the German offensive in the North had been rolling for several days and the situation there somewhat clarified, General Eisenhower called a conference at Twelfth Army Group Main headquarters in VERDUN for the morning of 19 December. Attending from SHAEF were General Eisenhower with his G-2, Major General Kenneth W. D. Strong (British), his G-3, General Bull and Air Marshall Sir Arthur W. Tedder; from Twelfth Army Group, General Bradley and selected staff members; from Sixth Army Group, General Devers and staff members, and from Third Army, General Patton. The meeting began at about 1130 hours.

198. Following a brief review of the situation and some discussion, it was decided that the Sixth Army Group should take over the front of the XII and XX Corps then deployed over about thirty miles of the Twelfth Army Group front, and, as promptly as possible, begin relief of Third Army units in the new zone with the exception of the 87th Division, the regiments of the 42nd Division which were then arriving in the area, and such supporting units as could be spared by General Patton. These oral instructions were confirmed later by cable from SHAEF. The relief was begun at once. In fact, some elements had already been relieved by 12th Armored Division as agreed between General Patton and General Patch.*

199. Returning to his advance command post in PHALSBOURG General Devers learned by telephone that he would have to make one additional infantry division available to SHAEF as soon as possible. The 87th Division, in the former zone of Third Army, was the logical choice. Its relief was continued, and SHAEF was informed that it would probably be available by 23 December.

200. Without delay a conference was held at PHALSBOURG with General Devers, General Patch and members of their respective staffs in attendance. The situation and SHAEF directives were explained and discussions leading to the issue of letters of instructions numbers 5 and 6 were held. SHAEF's confirmation cable mentioned above and dated 20 December is paraphrased as follows:

FROM: SHAEF MAIN SIGNED EISENHOWER

TO : CG SIXTH ARMY GROUP AND OTHERS

Cite SHGCT.

This is SCAF number 151.

Delivery will be made only to the addressee, or the person designated to receive the message for him. Distribution of this message will be held to the absolute minimum.

*Reference paragraphs 197 to 200 inclusive, interview with General Jenkins, G-3, in his office 29 December 1944.

1. This directive confirms verbal instructions already issued.

2. The enemy is making a powerful thrust with Infantry and Armor through the ARDENNES with the object of reaching the MEUSE. He still has uncommitted some of his Infantry and Armor and we must assume that he will use these to widen and strengthen this thrust. A further thrust, probably with Armor, is probable in the TRIER Area. Holding attacks on other parts of this front are likely. Unless he receives reinforcements, minor offensive operations East of the MOSELLE do not seem likely.

3. I intend to take immediate action to check the enemy's advance and without delay to launch counter offensives on each side of the enemy salient with all available Forces. I am prepared to yield ground in areas unessential to this main purpose in order to insure the security of essential areas and to strengthen our counter offensive.

4. Boundaries:

A. Between Central and Southern Groups of Armies: KAISERSLAUTERN-LANDSTUHL-NEUNKIRCHEN all to Southern Group of Armies. BOUSSE-CANLING-ST AVOLD-FAULQUEMONT-BARONVILLE-CHATEAU SALINS-BOMBASIE all to Central Group of Armies. (Running rights already agreed by Commanders).

B. Between Northern and Central Group of Armies: subject to modification as agreed by Commanders concerned, to Northern Group of Armies - COLOGNE, to Central Group - ST VITH, to Northern Group - GIVET.

C. New boundaries to be effective at times agreed between Commanders concerned but as early as possible.

5. Missions of Southern Group of Armies:

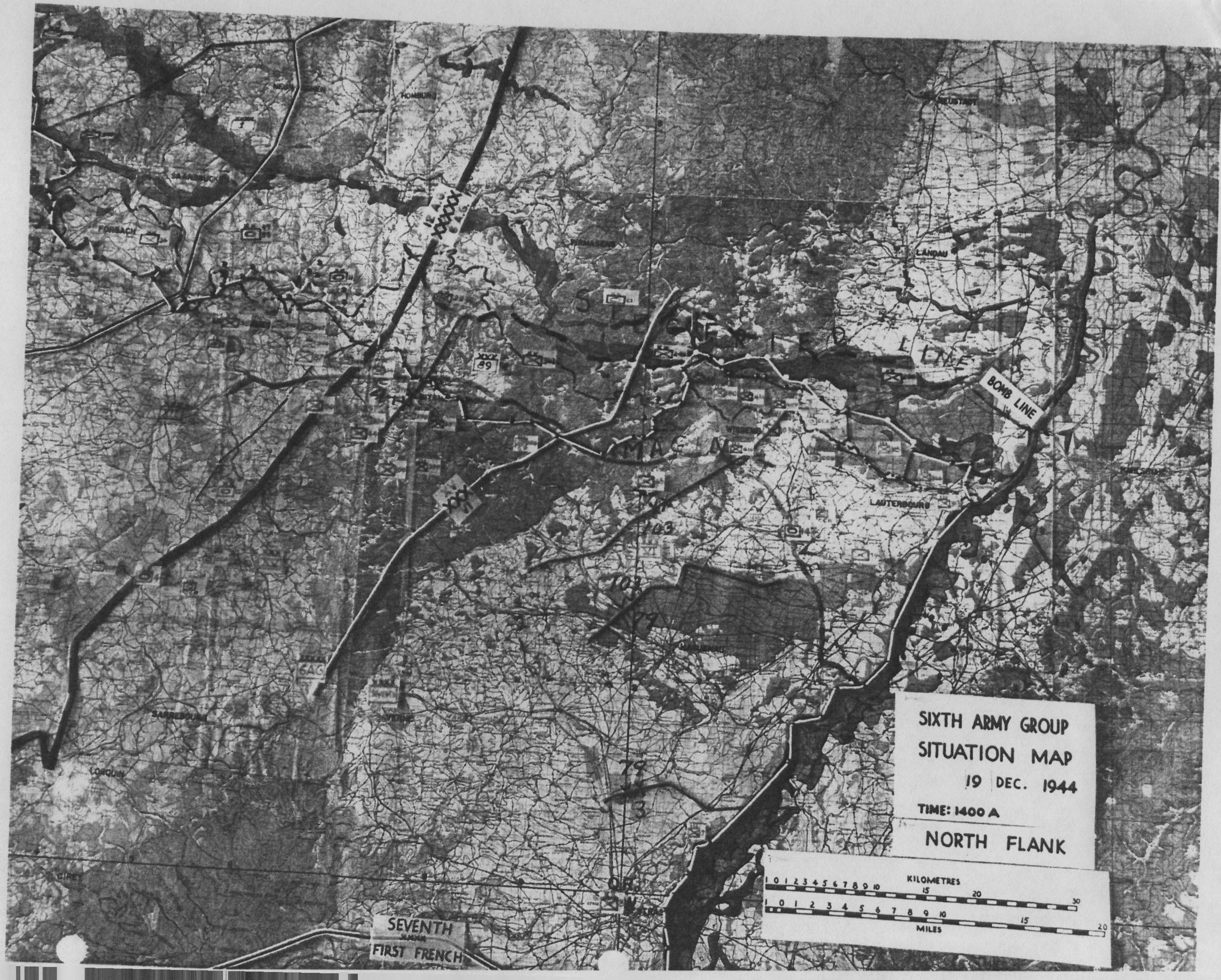
A. To cease present offensive operations, relieve Central Group of Armies Westward to SAARLAUTERN, exclusive, defend Zone against major penetrations.

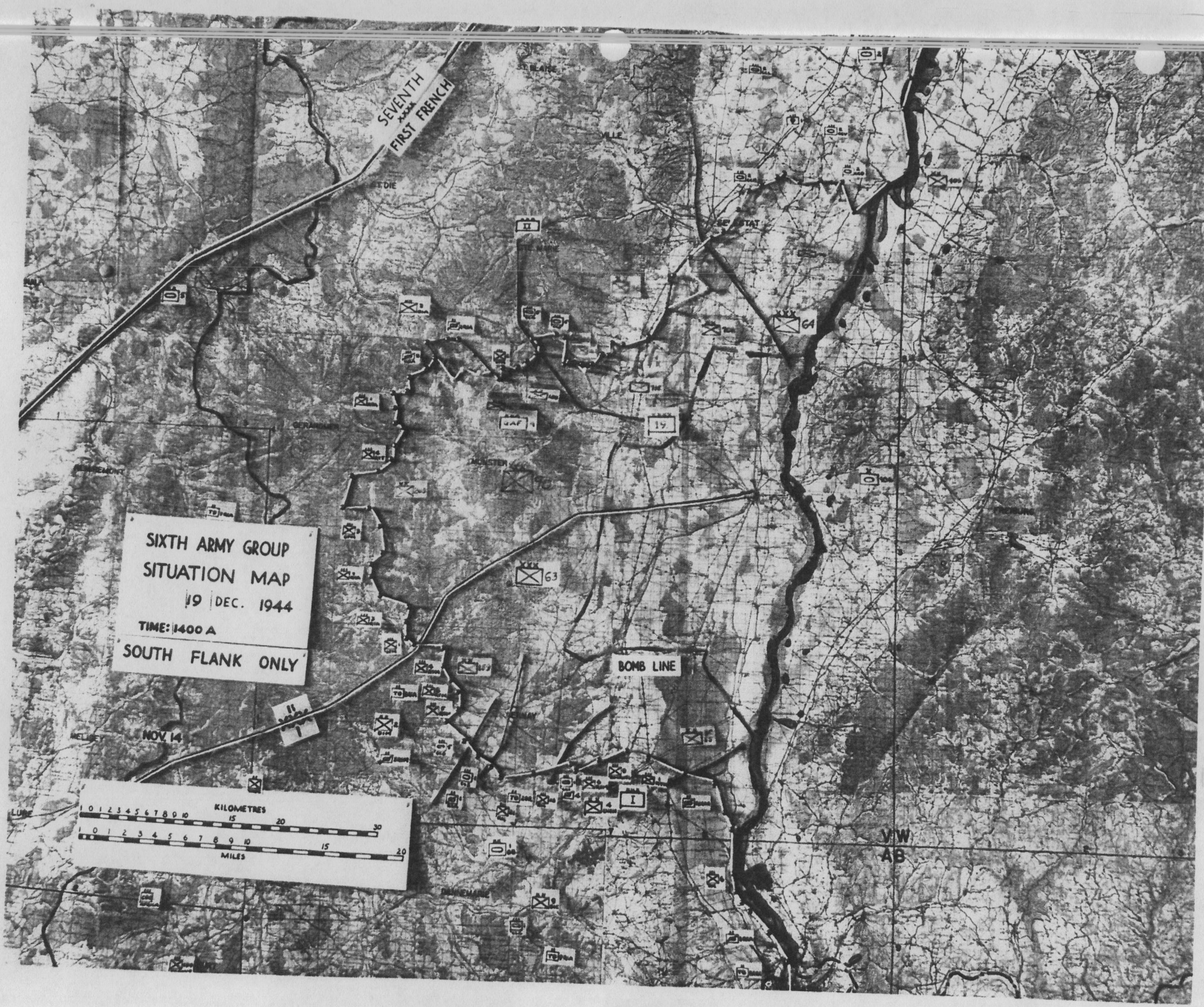
B. Southern Group of Armies will be prepared to yield ground rather than to endanger the integrity of their Forces. However this is subject to securing essential Lines of Communication.

C. To do everything possible to assist Central Group of Armies to accomplish their offensive mission.

6. Mission of Central Group of Armies.

A. To check the enemy's advance East of the MEUSE within its area.


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
19 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
NORTH FLANK
KILOMETRES
MILES
BOMB LINE
SIEGFRIED LINE
SEVENTH
FIRST FRENCH
LANDAU
LAUTERBOURG
SARREBOURG
FORBACH


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
19 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
SOUTH FLANK ONLY
SEVENTH
FIRST FRENCH
BOMB LINE
NOV. 14
KILOMETRES
MILES
VW
AB

B. To launch a counter offensive against the enemy in conjunction with Northern Group of Armies. Submit outline of Plan to include strength, time, direction.

7. Mission of Northern Group of Armies:

A. To check the enemy's advance East and South of the MEUSE within its area, paying particular attention to securing our line of Communications, LIEGE-NAMUR.

B. To launch a counter offensive against the enemy's salient in conjunction with Central Group of Armies. Submit outline of Plan to include direction, strength, time.

8. Forces assigned:

A. Central Group of Armies will propose 1 Division to pass to Command of Southern Group of Armies.

B. All Units of Central Group of Armies North of the Boundary between Central and Northern Groups of Armies will pass to the Operational Command of Commander in Chief, Northern Group of Armies. The Commander in Chief, Central Group of Armies retains responsibility for the supply and administration of these Units.

9. Acknowledge.

The following amendment to this cable above was dated 21 December:

FROM: SHAEF MAIN SIGNED SCAEF

TO : TWELFTH ARMY GROUP: EXFOR RPTD TO SIXTH ARMY GROUP

21 December 1944

Cite SHGCT.

Modification in detail to boundary announced in S-71724 between Central and Northern Groups of Armies is confirmed: all to Northern Group - GIVET-PRUM-COLOGNE.

Further confirmed that 106 Infantry Division and 7 Armored Division pass to operational Command of Northern Group of Armies.

In accordance with the foregoing directives, Letters of Instructions Numbers 5 and 6 were issued, they are quoted below:

HEADQUARTERS SIXTH ARMY GROUP
APO 23, U. S. ARMY

21 December 1944

SUBJECT: Letter of Instructions Number 5.

TO : CG, Seventh Army.

1. a. See current Intelligence Summary.

   b. Twenty First Army Group: No change.

   c. Twelfth Army Group is conducting operations to halt the current German offensive on its front.

2. Sixth Army Group assumes the defensive and relieves certain elements of the Twelfth Army Group westward to SAARLAUTERN, exclusive. Subject to securing essential lines of communication, Sixth Army Group will be prepared to yield ground rather than endanger the integrity of its forces.

   BOUNDARIES:

   a. Between Twelfth and Sixth Army Groups:

   No change in current boundary West of DOMBASLE (exclusive) - DOMBASLE (U-9803) - CHATEAU SALINS (Q-1025) - BARONVILLE (Q-1738) - FALQUEMONT (Q-1750) - ST AVOLD (Q-2556) - CARLING (Q-2663) - BUSS (SAAR) (Q-3276) (all to Twelfth Army Group) - NEUNKIRCHEN (Q-6083) - LANDSTUHL (Q-8791) - KAISERSLAUTERN (R-0294) (all to Sixth Army Group).

   b. Between Seventh Army and First French Army: No change.

3. Seventh Army:

   a. Abandon present offensive operations at once and defend in zone against any major hostile penetration. Be prepared to yield ground rather than endanger the integrity of the command.

   b. Initiate at once and complete with the least practicable delay the relief of elements of Third Army in the Western section of the new area of responsibility, except the following: 87th Inf Div with attachments agreed by Third Army; all elements of 42 Div present; Engineer elements agreed by Third Army, heavy artillery elements left in position by Third Army and service installations belonging to Third Army. The 87th Div with attachments, all elements of 42 Div present, Engineer

elements, and heavy field artillery elements left in position by Third Army will pass to operational control of Seventh Army at a time and place to be agreed between CG's Seventh and Third Armies. Service installations and the necessary operating personnel belonging to Third Army in Seventh Army's new area of responsibility will remain under the operational control of Third Army until installations are passed to Seventh Army by Third Army. Arrangements will be made by Seventh Army directly with Third Army to effect this relief. Passage of command of the new area of responsibility from Third Army to Seventh Army will be as agreed between CG's Seventh and Third Armies.

c. Protect flank along West bank of RHINE. Disposition of troops along the West bank of RHINE and of bridging material will be such that they can be readily employed in an attack across the RHINE North of STRASBOURG.

d. All positions will be completely wired in, and all avenues of approach, especially those suitable for armor, will be extensively mined. In addition, all roads will be covered by road blocks. Tactical wire, mine fields, roadblocks and other tactical obstacles (natural and artificial) will be defended by fire.

e. A reserve consisting of at least one RCT (or its equivalent) (less Arty component), one Tk Bn, and one TD Bn will be held in vicinity of SAVERNE, prepared to move by motor on six hours' notice. The Artillery component will be so disposed that it can join the RCT on four hours' notice. This reserve will be committed only on Sixth Army Group authority.

f. An overlay showing the defensive organization of the Army area by regimental sub-sectors and the proposed garrisons, including the disposition of all artillery and reserves, will be forwarded to this headquarters with the least possible delay.

g. Protect Northwest flank of Sixth Army Group.

h. Third and Seventh Armies have joint use of the highway paralleling and immediately west of the new Army Group boundary between DOMBASLE and BUSS. Third Army will have joint use, with Seventh Army, of roads in the old Third Army area of responsibility now passed to Seventh Army, until service installations of Third Army in this area either have been passed to control of Seventh Army or have been evacuated.

i. Reconnaissance will be initiated at once for suitable rearward positions on which to meet hostile penetrations from either flank or the center.

j. Be prepared to release one Infantry Division for movement to Twelfth Army Group any time after 23 December, on short notice.

4. Administrative Instructions will be issued separately.

5. No change in current Signal Instructions.

By Command of Lieutenant General DEVERS:

DAVID G. BARR,
Major General, G.S.C.,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

/s/ REUBEN E. JENKINS
REUBEN E. JENKINS,
Brigadier General, G.S.C.,
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3.

HEADQUARTERS SIXTH ARMY GROUP
APO 23, U. S. ARMY

22 December 1944

SUBJECT: Letter of Instructions Number 6.

TO : CG, First French Army.

1. a. See current Intelligence Summary.

   b. Twenty First Army Group: No change.

   c. Twelfth Army Group is conducting operations to halt the current German offensive on its front.

2. Sixth Army Group assumes the defensive and relieves certain elements of the Twelfth Army Group westward to SAARLAUTERN, exclusive. Subject to securing essential lines of communication, Sixth Army Group will be prepared to yield ground rather than endanger the integrity of its forces. Sixth Army Group will continue the offensive on the South to reduce the COLMAR pocket, destroy the Germans West of the RHINE and defend that line.

   BOUNDARIES:

   a. Between Twelfth and Sixth Army Groups:

   No change in current boundary West of DOMBASLE (exclusive) - DOMBASLE (U-9803) - CHATEAU SALINS (Q-1025) - BARONVILLE (Q-1738) - FALQUEMONT (Q-1750) - ST AVOLD (Q-2556) - CARLING (Q-2663) - BUSS (SAAR) (Q-3276) (all to Twelfth Army Group) - NEUNKIRCHEN (Q-6083) - LANDSTUHL (Q-8791) - KAISERSLAUTERN (R-0294) (all to Sixth Army Group).

b. <u>Between Seventh Army and First French Army</u>: No change.

c. South flank: No change.

3. <u>First French Army</u>:

a. Launch a coordinated attack along the entire front no later than January 5, 1945, and destroy the Germans West of the RHINE.

b. A main effort from the North will be directed so as to capture COLMAR, thereafter exploiting in the direction of the BRISACH bridge.

c. A main effort from the South will be so directed as to capture CERNAY and cut the road net in the GUEBWILLER area, thereafter exploiting in the direction of the BRISACH bridge.

d. All areas in which offensive operations are not being immediately conducted will be completely wired in and protected by mine fields without delay. All avenues of approach in these areas, especially those suitable for armor will be extensively mined. In addition all roads in these areas will be covered by road blocks. Tactical wire, mine fields, road blocks and other tactical obstacles (natural and artificial) will be defended by fire. Immediately upon completion of the destruction of the Germans West of the RHINE all approaches leading from West bank of the RHINE will be wired in and mined. In addition all roads leading to the West Bank of the RHINE will be protected by road blocks. These wired in localities, mine fields and road blocks will be defended by fire.

e. All bridges across the RHINE will be destroyed.

f. Upon completion of the destruction of the Germans West of the RHINE, be prepared to take over immediately the STRASBOURG area and defend the line of the RHINE as far South as the Swiss border.

g. Protect South flank of Sixth Army Group and Franco-Italian frontier in currently assigned sector.

4. No change in current Administrative Instructions.

5. No change in current Signal Instructions.

By command of Lieutenant General DEVERS:

DAVID G. BARR,
Major General, G.S.C.,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

/s/ REUBEN E. JENKINS
REUBEN E. JENKINS,
Brigadier General, G.S.C.,
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3

201. On about 21 December a message paraphrased as follows was received by the headquarters:

> Request disposition of German one-man submarine minus torpedo, position 781864 captured intact by 44th AAA Brigade.

Some light on this subject is found under date of 19 December in the Narrative of Events, History of the 442nd Infantry Regiment for December as follows:

> At 1230 the 1st platoon outpost of Antitank Co (Pvts Hikichi and D. Nakamura) sighted a German one-man submarine 150 yards off Menton. About 50 yards from shore the submarine grounded on a sand bar, and under cover of a 57mm AT gun a squad from Antitank Co, consisting of Lt. Alvin Meier, T/Sgt Kawamura, Cpl Isobe, Pfcs Ota, Yokoyaka and Mizuno, waded out and captured the submarine and its occupant, a German corporal.
>
> The submarine was of miniature size, with a plexiglass turret and facilities for one torpedo, and the one-man crew was equipped with an oxygen mask. The submarine was secured by the 232nd Engineer Co and turned over to the Brigade Bomb Disposal Unit for delivery to the U. S. Navy. The submarine was one of several believed operating along the coast.
>
> Co B captured a prisoner on the border at 797887. The prisoner was from the 5th Co, 253rd Grenadier Regiment, 34th Inf Division. He was part of a 7 man reconnaissance patrol from the 2nd Bn, 253rd GR, attempting to gain information in the 100th Battalion sector. His patrol had the use of three one-man submarines and was under the command of a battalion staff officer. Promotion to next higher grade was promised for successful accomplishment of the mission. The patrol had been out for three days, had split up, and the prisoner was making his way back to the German lines from Menton when captured.

202. Working against the obstacles of track removal and tunnel damage the LUNEVILLE-SARREBOURG-SAVERNE rail line was opened to HAGUENAU and STRASBOURG by 21 December. (G-4 After Action Report)

203. On 21 December a memorandum was issued containing warning and counter-measures against enemy agents operating behind our lines. (117)

204. The A. C. of S., G-2 had for some time noted a change in the attitude of the enemy along the Sixth Army Group front. On 21 December, a special G-2 ESTIMATE OF THE ENEMY SITUATION was published, embodying the following warning:

> "The enemy has sufficient reserves in the form of replacements to keep bolstering his units whenever they become seriously depleted. The tendency apparent lately to move in whole regi-

mental or battalion strength units reflects an aggressive attitude. In addition, the terrain is such that it lends itself to an aggressive defense, being covered by excellent defensive positions to which the enemy can retire should Allied counter-attacks prove too successful. Finally, the enemy must keep employed on this front the maximum number of Allied units, in order to prevent their removal to the active front toward the north." (118)

205. The situation on 22 December was significant and is summarized in the "Redline" dispatch of that date paraphrased below:

TO FOR ACTION: SHAEF FWD

FROM : SIXTH ARMY GROUP 22 December 1944

Relief by Seventh Army of units of Third Army is progressing according to schedule and without incident. For the relief of 35th Division 1 RCT of 44th Division has closed at WOELFLING (Q-5954). Relief is scheduled to be completed by 1800A today. Task Force FICKETT will be relieved by 1800A 24 December.

Organization of Seventh Army's two Corps is: XV Corps, 12th Armored Division, 44th Division, 87th Division, 100th Division, 103rd Division; VI Corps, 14th Armored Division, 45th Division, 79th Division. Both Corps are instructed to organize and defend the ground now held. XV Corps will designate a reserve of 1 Infantry Division to be used on Army order.

Nearing completion is the mutual relief of 3rd and 36th Divisions and the exchange of command responsibilities took place at 1430A 21 December, with 3rd Division in French II Corps and 36th Division in STRASBOURG area.

There has been no material change on our entire front. The enemy on the front of VI Corps has offered strong resistance from fortifications but the action of XV Corps has been confined to patrolling.

The enemy remained aggressive NW of COLMAR on the First French Army front. Elsewhere on the front little activity was reported.

206. The following Christmas message from General Devers to his troops was distributed on 22 December:

HEADQUARTERS SIXTH ARMY GROUP
Office of the Army Group Commander

22 December 1944

TO : THE TROOPS COMPRISING SIXTH ARMY GROUP.

For some of the American units in the Sixth Army Group this is the first Christmas overseas, for others it is the second or even the third; while, after four war years French forces are fighting again on their own beloved soil--all of which, with the exception of a few infested areas, has been cleansed of the invader. In this latter, surely for all of us, there is a measure of happiness.

However, this season of the year, itself, because it is inseparable from intimate and wholesome sentiments, serves in fact to emphasize the grimness, the indescribable suffering and sacrifice of war. Consequently, the thoughts and prayers of our people and, indeed of all the people of the United Nations, on this day, will be for you and the other men and women who are taking so courageous a part in this world wide struggle.

Also, I believe all of us can now see more clearly that if the Axis Powers had succeeded, those institutions treasured by us and all freedom loving people might in time have completely vanished. You who have freed hundreds of cities and towns, thousands of square miles of territory, have gained personal knowledge and understanding of what happens to civilian populations when under a ruthless conqueror--the disruption of families, the depletion of resources, forced labor, exportation of men into bondage, wholesale murder and indescribable torture.

Had the Axis Powers been able to consolidate their early victories, their resources, in time, might have been sufficient to dominate the earth. It is certain that the struggle would have been prolonged--perhaps even for generations. It is heartening, therefore, that each year since America entered the war, the darkness which threatened civilization has grown less dense. Finally Allied successes made victory certain. Last year at this time final victory seemed far off, but now it is within your reach.

Credit for this is due to superior over-all leadership, to the world strategy employed, to the industrial miracle which has been wrought in supplying ships, planes, tanks, guns and all the munitions of war. Also, and even more directly, it is due to the determination, intelligence and courage of the men and women in the supply lines and on the battlefields of the sea, the air and the ground.

It is your individual determination and courage which will reach out and grasp the final victory, and it is my most fervent prayer that this may be soon accomplished. May the peace which follows be lasting, and may each of you and all of those who have taken

part in bringing about final victory have the full measure of happiness you so surely deserve.

/s/ JACOB L. DEVERS
JACOB L. DEVERS
Lieutenant General, U.S.A.
Commanding.

207. By 22 December the relief of the 36th Division by the 3rd Division had been effected and the 1st DMI had completed its movement to the Western FRANCE Sector near BORDEAUX.

208. Because of the need for all available troops to man the greatly extended Sixth Army Group front, an urgent message was dispatched directing immediate return of the 1st DMI, 2nd Bn 17 Engineer Combat Regiment and the 3rd Mobile Surgical Formation to the Sixth Army Group area at SAVERNE by the fastest possible means by road and rail. Priority on road and railways was assigned the movement. (119)

209. On 22 December, General Devers presented awards to the following members of the command:

LEGION OF MERIT

Brigadier General Reuben E. Jenkins, USA, Hq Sixth Army Group
Colonel Russel L. Vittrup, GSC, Hq Sixth Army Group
Colonel Louis R. Wirak, CE, Hq Sixth Army Group
Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin L. Mattingly, CWS, Hq Sixth Army Gp.

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

Lieutenant Colonel James W. Pumpelly, GSC, Hq Sixth Army Group

Presentation was made at the Advance CP with appropriate ceremony.(120)

210. Finding current facilities for handling Expeditionary Force Messages and Senders Composition Messages inadequate to meet the demand, the Adjutant General, Sixth Army Group arranged for use of commercial press radio circuits providing greatly increased capacity and speed in handling messages by virtue of decentralization to units. Details were announced in letter, 22 December. (121)

211. On 23 December distribution was made of the inspiring Christmas messages from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Commander-in-Chief; Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War; and George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff.

212. Progress in redistribution of Seventh Army units is covered in the "Redline" dispatch of 23 December paraphrased below:

Seventh Army reorganization continues according to schedule. 14th Armored is directed to move into Corps reserve vicinity of SOULTZ-SOUS-FORETS (R-1137). 79th Div relieves 14th Armored Div

in position without delay. 103rd has moved into assembly area under XV Corps at HELLIMER (Q-3445). 45th Div has completed relief of 103rd Div in position. 100th Div relieved 44th Div which has moved to the SARREGUEMINES area and completed the relief of 35th Div. Task Force HUDELSON composed of 14th Armored Div and 117 Cavalry today is relieving 106 Cavalry Group which holds a line between Q-8049 to Q-9443. Little activity on the Seventh Army front. First French Army front was generally quiet. The enemy's defensive attitude continued in XV Corps zone while in VI Corps zone, enemy remained alert. The resistance continued strong NW of COLMAR, however 3 DIA was able to make slight advances over the rugged terrain west of LA CHAPELLE (V-6046).

213. The following is quoted from Weekly Intelligence Summary Number 14, dated 23 December:

1. GENERAL SUMMARY

The German Nineteenth Army, partially isolated in the VOSGES area, is showing every intention of maintaining its defensive positions in the pocket and along the RHINE. The German First Army has been forced back into the HARDT Mountains after having attempted to salvage and husband infantry strength for the SIEGFRIED Line, by strengthening weak points with mobile armored forces. Reported heavy RR movement in the rear area of First German Army indicates probable arrival of reinforcements.

2. SIXTH US ARMY GROUP FRONT (SAAR-VOSGES Front)

* * *

d. ENEMY STRENGTH SIXTH ARMY GROUP FRONT (SAAR-VOSGES Front)

Units in Contact:	
Seventh US Army	15,000
First French Army	13,000
Artillery Effectives:	
Seventh US Army	No figures available
First French Army	4,500
Possible Reserve from Wehrkreis V and other sources available within the next 2-3 weeks	21,000
T O T A L	53,500
Tanks and SP Guns	
Seventh US Army	No figures available
First French Army	120

214. On 23 December Administrative Letter No 6 was issued. This was to accompany Letter of Instructions Number 5 and concerned supply and evacuation for units passing from operational control of Third Army to Seventh Army. (122)

215. The "Redline" dispatch for 25 December, paraphrased, reads in part as follows:

> Continuing reorganization and relief on the front of Seventh Army, 79th Division completed the relief of 14th Armored Division which passed to VI Corps Reserve. Last night relief of the 6th Armored Division and Task Force FICKETT was completed. Seventh Army's Reserve is 36th Division, relieved last night by Task Force LINDEN consisting of 42nd Division's Infantry Regiments, reinforced.
>
> Much rail activity in the LANDAU R-2766 and HOMBURG Q-7281 areas reported by fighter bombers.

216. On this same date the 87th Division cleared Seventh Army zone on its movement to REIMS.

217. Shortly past noon, 26 December, General Bull, G-3, SHAEF, telephoned to arrange that General Devers, General Barr and General Jenkins should meet him that afternoon at LUNEVILLE some sixty kilometers distant. General Devers was away but Generals Barr and Jenkins made a quick trip in cub planes and were on hand when General Bull arrived about 1500 hours. General Bull brought the situation up to date and delivered General Eisenhower's draft directive that the Sixth Army Group should pass to the defensive along its entire front with the main position along the line of the VOSGES. The purpose, he explained, was to shorten the front and make available for SHAEF reserve a corps including one infantry division and one armored division to replace the 87th Division and the 11th Armored Division then in SHAEF reserve but to be released to Twelfth Army Group for operations. (123)

218. General Devers, who had spent the day in the First French Army zone, met General Barr and General Jenkins on their return from LUNEVILLE and immediately arranged for General Patch and members of his staff to confer at PHALSBOURG that same evening, the conference getting under way about 1800 hours. Explanation was made of the current situation and SHAEF's new directive, still in rough draft form with pencilled notes by General Bull. After dinner there was some further discussion of the implications of the directive and General Patch returned to his command post. General Devers, General Jenkins and Colonel Harrison, G-2, followed.

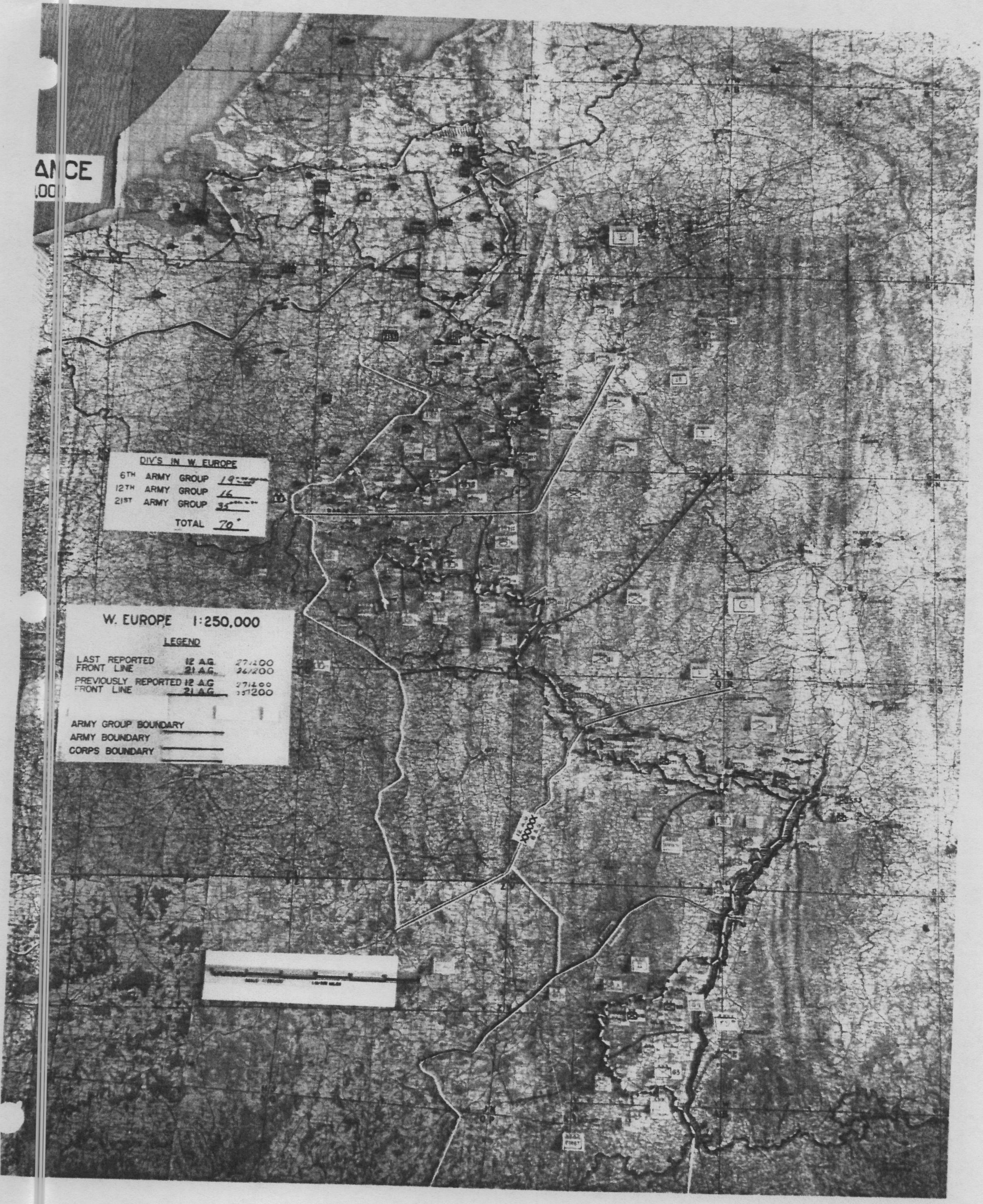
219. General Patch had previously directed his corps commanders to report there for conference at 2130 hours. At this meeting, the A. C. of S., G-2 reiterated his convictions of the imminence of a German attack. The forces to be employed by the enemy, the locality (HOMBURG-SARREBOURG axis), and even the date (between 1 and 3 January)

were specified. In view of the G-2's estimate of the situation, the following decisions were reached. In order to provide the additional corps required by SHAEF the 36th Division then refitting in the STRASBOURG area would be moved at once to the SARREBOURG area where the 12th Armored Division was disengaged and available. General Devers announced his decision to move his advance command post from PHALSBOURG back to VITTEL. This was in rear of the new main defensive position and would serve to reunite his headquarters. The XXI Corps Headquarters, recently arrived, was the logical choice to head up the SHAEF reserve. It was to move into the facilities at PHALSBOURG coincident with their evacuation by Sixth Army Group Advance C.P., thereby masking the latter's move. (124)

220. Before leaving Seventh Army command post General Devers outlined generally the manner in which he desired Seventh Army operations conducted, secured General Patch's views as to army boundaries and reached two further decisions as follows; first, to allow the First French Army to retain the 3rd Division reinforced by one of the newly arrived Infantry Regiments, and second, to reassign to Seventh Army the 2nd DB, General Leclerc's French Armored Division, and move it West of the VOSGES. There it would provide a strong, mobile reserve whose need was emphasized by loss of the 12th Armored Division. Thus within the short space of the few hours since 1500, SHAEF's new program had been transmitted to three echelons of command with benefit of direct personal explanation and the briefing of staff members at each level. In addition, the major decisions for carrying out this program had been reached and announced in so far as Seventh Army was concerned. Meanwhile General de Lattre, commanding the First French Army, was directed to confer with General Devers at VITTEL at 1030 hours the next morning.

221. On the morning of 27 December, Generals Devers, Jenkins and Adcock returned by plane to VITTEL for conference with General de Lattre. The situation, SHAEF's directive and implementing decisions were reviewed and General Devers explained the manner in which he desired these operations conducted. He further directed prompt movement of one combat command of 2nd DB to reserve West of the VOSGES in advance of remainder of the division whose movement was to begin immediately on relief by elements of the 1st DMI. The 1st DMI was staged into BACCARAT from COGNAC in Western FRANCE and it was directed that as soon as an RCT of this unit closed in BACCARAT it would move East of the VOSGES at once to expedite relief of further elements of the 2nd DB. The remainder of the 1st DMI was to follow as soon as possible. The pertinent provisions of the forthcoming Letter of Instructions Number 7 were explained to General de Lattre who was in accord with them except for minor boundary changes readily adjusted with Seventh Army. It was agreed that as soon as the current crisis had passed, first priority should be given to reduction of the COLMAR pocket. After lunch, conferences were continued between Sixth Army Group staff and representatives of corresponding sections of First French Army staff.


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
28 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
NORTH FLANK
KILOMETRES
MILES
NEW BOUNDARY EFFECTIVE DEC. 20, 1944
OLD BOUNDARY
BOMB LINE
SEVENTH
FIRST FRENCH
NOV. 13


ANCE
DIV'S IN W. EUROPE
6TH ARMY GROUP 19
12TH ARMY GROUP 16
21ST ARMY GROUP 35
TOTAL 70
W. EUROPE 1:250,000
LEGEND
LAST REPORTED FRONT LINE 12 A.G. 27/200
21 A.G. 26/200
PREVIOUSLY REPORTED FRONT LINE 12 A.G 27/200
21 A.G.
ARMY GROUP BOUNDARY
ARMY BOUNDARY
CORPS BOUNDARY


SIXTH ARMY GROUP
SITUATION MAP
28 DEC. 1944
TIME: 1400 A
NORTH FLANK
KILOMETRES
MILES
NEW BOUNDARY EFFECTIVE DEC. 20, 1944
OLD BOUNDARY
BOMB LINE
SEVENTH
FIRST FRENCH
NOV. 13
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222. That same afternoon General Devers flew to PARIS. Up to this time no formal directive had been received from SHAEF. At 2230 hours General Jenkins talked by telephone with General Bull, at SHAEF, who assured him that as a result of a conference between General Eisenhower and General Devers, the latter's plans for Sixth Army Group were approved without change. He added that a confirmation cable would be sent next morning. With this assurance the draft of Letter of Instructions Number 7 was prepared and one copy dispatched by Colonel Bender, G-3 Operations, to Seventh Army for advance information and comment. Another copy was awaiting General Devers' study on his arrival from PARIS. Upon return of Colonel Bender with request for minor boundary adjustment, the letter was approved and published as follows:

HEADQUARTERS SIXTH ARMY GROUP
APO 23, U. S. ARMY

28 December 1944

SUBJECT: Letter of Instructions Number 7.

TO : CG Seventh Army
CG First French Army

1. a. See current Intelligence Summary.

b. XXI Army Group continues to block current German thrust in the North and prepares for a counter offensive.

c. Twelfth Army Group continues the defensive south of the MOSELLE, blocks the current German offensive in the north and prepares for a counter offensive from the south in conjunction with XXI Army Group.

2. Sixth Army Group continues the defensive and will be prepared to give ground rather than endanger the integrity of its forces. West of the general area of BITCHE the main position will follow the general trace of the MAGINOT Line. South of BITCHE the main position will follow the eastern slopes of the VOSGES as far south as the area west of COLMAR from where it will follow the general trace of the present front line to the vicinity of THANN (V-5313); thence, along the southeast slope of the VOSGES to the area north of BELFORT (A-3493), thence, across the BELFORT GAP to the general vicinity of DELLE (A-4579).

<u>BOUNDARIES</u>:

a. <u>Between Twelfth and Sixth Army Groups</u>: No change.

b. <u>Between Seventh and First French Armies</u>: West of JARMENIL (V-1446) no change. JARMENIL - BRUYERES (V-2557) - ROUGES EAUX (V-3163) - ST DIE (V-4266) - point (V-5484) - ROTHAU (V-6184)

(all to First French Army) - OBERNA (V-8184) (to Seventh Army) - PLOBSHEIM (V-9986) - OFFENBURG (W-1686), both to First French Army.

c. South flank: No change.

3. a. Seventh Army.

(1) Defend assigned sector. (See para 2 for main positions).

First intermediate position east of BITCHE: The general line; MAGINOT Line - West bank of RHINE.

Second intermediate position east of BITCHE: The general line; BITCHE (Q-7750) - NIEDERBRONN (Q-9339) - BISCHWEILER (R-0919) - West bank of RHINE.

Third intermediate position: The general line: BITCHE (Q-7750) - INGWILLER (Q-8130) - STRASBOURG (W-0198) - West bank of RHINE.

(2) Assemble in SARREBOURG area without delay, prepared to move on short notice, SHAEF reserves as follows:

XXI Corps Hq/Hq Co and Corps troops currently earmarked by SHAEF for this Corps.

One Infantry Division with one TD, one Tk and one AAA AW Bn attached.

One Armored Division with one TD and one AAA AW Bn attached.

(3) A reserve of not less than 1 RCT and 1 Armored Combat Command will be held mobile in SARREBOURG area prepared to move on six hours notice. This reserve will only be committed on the authority of the Army Group Commander. Exact location and unit designations of this reserve will be reported.

(4) Be prepared to receive and coordinate movement of Second French Armored Division and US artillery units upon their relief from present mission by First French Army. Coordinate movement with First French Army.

(5) Protect northwest flank Sixth Army Group.

(6) See paragraphs 3 b (3) and (4) and 3 x.

b. First French Army.

(1) Defend assigned sector (see para 2 for main positions).

Intermediate position on the north flank: generally along present front line to SELESTAT (V-7963) - RHINE-RHONE CANAL.

Intermediate positions on the south flank:

First position; generally along present front line from the VOSGES to SWISS border.

Second position; along present front line from the VOSGES - HELMSBRUNN (V-6203) - ALTKIRCH (A-6292) - RIESPACH (A-6683) - WOLSCHWIN (A-7673).

Third position; along the general line MASMUNSTER (V-4408) - EUBACH (A-5193) - PFETTERHAUSEN (A-5778).

(2) A reserve of not less than one RCT and one Armored Combat Command will be held mobile in the vicinity of LUXEUIL (K-0321) prepared to move on six hours notice. This reserve will be committed only on the authority of the Army Group Commander. Exact locations and unit designations of this reserve will be reported.

(3) Relieve Second French Armored Division and pass it to control of Seventh Army at a point agreed with Seventh Army Commander. One Combat Command will arrive in the SARREBOURG area no later than 0700A hours 31 December and remainder of division no later than 0700A hours 3 January. See also paragraphs 3 a (4) and 3 x.

(4) By 0700A hours 31 December, relieve and pass to control of Seventh Army Commander at a point agreed by Seventh Army Commander the following US units:

Hq & Hq Btry 17 FA Group
93d FA Bn, 105 mm How (SP)
975 FA Bn, 155 mm How
977th FA Bn, 155 mm Gun

(5) 1 DMI passes to command of the First French Army upon arrival in the detraining area.

(6) Protect south flank Seventh Army, south flank Sixth Army Group, and Franco-Italian border in currently assigned zone.

x. (1) Efforts compatible with integrity of forces will be made to hold STRASBOURG and MULHOUSE. These must be such as will not jeopardize the integrity of forces in a withdrawal to a rearward position.

(2) Lateral contact and limiting (coordinating) points along the boundary for the defensive position will be as agreed by Army Commanders. In the organization of the ground, first intermediate positions and the main position will be developed simultaneously with bulk of effort and materiel being assigned to the main position;

second intermediate positions will have next priority; third intermediate positions will have last priority.

(3) All intermediate positions mentioned herein will be in the nature of outposts. In the face of heavy attack withdrawal of outpost troops will be conducted so as to preserve integrity of units. Conduct of the defense throughout shall be such as to insure the integrity of the command forward of the main battle position and the integrity of the command on the main battle position. Principal counter attacks will be planned as follows:

(a) By Seventh Army: against German penetrations along the general axes: HOMBURG - NANCY; HOMBURG - SARREBOURG; COLMAR - REMIREMONT; COLMAR - ST. DIE.

(b) By First French Army: Against German penetrations along the general axes: COLMAR - REMIREMONT; COLMAR - ST DIE; and against a German penetration of the BELFORT GAP.

(4) Army Commanders will take advantage of every opportunity to rotate units between forward and reserve defense areas in order to accomplish a maximum of re-training and re-fitting.

(5) All areas in which intermediate and final defensive positions are established will be without delay completely wired in and protected by mine fields and other suitable defensive installations. All avenues of approach in these areas, especially those suitable for armor will be extensively mined. All roads will be adequately protected by road blocks. All obstacles, natural and artificial, will be defended by fire.

(6) All culverts, road and rail bridges, trestles, canal locks and installations, rail yards, switching and signal systems and similar installations will be prepared for demolition and will be destroyed if in danger of capture.

(7) All dumps, stocks of construction timber, saw mills, utilities, machine shops and repair facilities, factories, and all similar installations will be destroyed if in danger of capture.

(8) All rail rolling stocks and motor transport will be destroyed as soon as it is proved impracticable to insure their removal.

(9) All equipment, our own and hostile, which cannot be removed will be destroyed beyond repair if threatened with capture.

(10) Maximum use will be made of deceptive measures: false dumps, dummy installations, roving guns etc. The operation of radio nets to conceal displacement will be utilized.

(11) The movement of combat vehicles such as armor,

artillery, etc., will be accomplished under cover of darkness, without lights. All convoy movements will be similarly conducted. Daylight movements will be limited to movement of single vehicles, by infiltration, in such numbers as will not exceed a normally expected amount of daylight traffic in a given area.

(12) Detailed plans of armies showing defensive organization will be forwarded to this headquarters as a matter of urgency. Weekly progress reports will be submitted so as to reach this headquarters by 1200A hours each Monday as of 1200A hours Saturday.

4. Administrative Instructions will be issued separately.

5. No change in current Signal Instructions.

By Command of Lieutenant General DEVERS:

DAVID G. BARR,
Major General, G.S.C.,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

/s/ REUBEN E. JENKINS
REUBEN E. JENKINS,
Brigadier General, G.S.C.,
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3.

HEADQUARTERS SIXTH ARMY GROUP
APO 23, U. S. ARMY

29 December 1944

ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER) (to accompany Letter
: of Instruction No. 7)
NUMBER 7)

1. The Supply and Evacuation of the 2nd D.B. (French) will continue to be a responsibility of the Seventh Army.

2. Upon reaching the detraining area (see paragraph 3 b (5) of Letter of Instruction Number 7, this headquarters, dated 28 December 1944), the responsibility for movement, maintenance of equipment, supply of Class II and IV, and evacuation of the 1st D.M.I. will be assumed by First French Army. At the same time, responsibility for supply of Class I (French ration scales), III, and V will pass to Seventh Army.

3. Movement of supplies east of the main defensive positions, as defined in paragraph 2 of Letter of Instruction #7, this Headquarters, dated 28 December 1944, will be limited to the minimum essential for accomplishment of the assigned missions of the Armies. Army reserves in excess of one day of supply will not be maintained

east of the main defensive positions.

4. Depots, supply installations, and usable captured equipment will be withdrawn, under cover of darkness where feasible, west of the main defensive positions, except as provided in paragraph 3 above. All supply dumps, equipment and installations (both allied and enemy) remaining east of the main defensive positions will be prepared without delay for complete destruction.

5. Armies will arrange direct with CONAD for the use of areas and installations in CONAD area which are required by reason of the re-adjustment of army supply and evacuation installations. If changes in the army rear boundaries are desired, appropriate recommendations will be made to this Headquarters.

6. SOLOC (DGMRS)* will assist the armies in movement of supplies and installations as required. Armies will assist in the removal of rolling stock and locomotives west of the main defensive positions and will insure the complete destruction of all railroad equipment and facilities if threatened with capture.

7. During such time as Seventh Army is responsible for the supply and evacuation of any units operating in the area of the First French Army, adequate line of communications facilities and any other necessary installations along the supply axis will be made available for the exclusive use of the Seventh Army.**

By command of Lieutenant General DEVERS:

/s/ J. L. TARR
J. L. TARR,
Colonel, AGD,
Adjutant General.

Thus within the space of two days, Sixth Army Group had been reoriented with a fully defensive mission and provided with a plan coordinated with all concerned. Meanwhile some of the more urgent steps in translating the plan into action had already been initiated by appropriate staff action in the nature of fragmentary orders. Examples are the reinforcement of the 3rd Division and orders for the transfer of the 2nd DB from the First French Army to Seventh Army control. This latter action was effected 29 December.

223. On 26 December a message was received from General de Larminat forecasting that 1st DMI and associated units would close in SAVERNE from Western FRANCE by 31 December. (125)

* Director General Military Railways.

** Administrative Letter #7, above, is modified by #8, 5 January 1945.

224. Administrative Instructions Number 8 were issued 26 December. They listed the administrative reports required from major subordinate commands and those from the 20th Machine Records Unit serving Seventh Army. (126)

225. On 27 December the Advance Command Post at PHALSBOURG returned to VITTEL. XXI Corps Headquarters under Major General Frank W. Milburn immediately moved into the vacated premises.

226. On 27 December the continued build-up of hostile strength opposite our XV Corps was reported to SHAEF in the daily "Redline" message. (DR 27 Dec)

227. At a meeting held 27 December at SHAEF, where the Army Groups were represented, requirements for service units through May 1945, were reviewed, and for the first time it was believed that the allocations made would meet the needs of the Sixth Army Group. (G-4 After Action Report for December)(Concurrence G-3, Troops, Colonel Vittrup)

228. The "Redline" message for 28 December is paraphrased below:

> On our front activity continues quiet. In VI Corps zone the enemy continues to improve his defenses. In the XV Corps zone enemy activity decreased but contact was maintained. Fighting in the SIGOLSHEIM (V-6848) area NW of COLMAR continues intense, against strong enemy resistance. We now hold part of the town and the hill to the south of the town.
>
> Infantry elements of 70th Division closed in BISCHWILLER area forming Task Force HERREN to enter the RHINE Defense Line between Task Force HARRIS (63 Division's Infantry) on the north, and Task Force LINDEN (42 Division's Infantry) on the south. XXI Corps became operational with the 36th Division (in SARREBOURG area) and 12th Armored Division (in DIEUZE area) attached.

It will be remembered that early arrival of the nine Infantry Regiments of the 42nd, 63rd and 70th Divisions had been arranged with the hope of attaching one or more regiments to each Seventh Army division in line to make possible the successive withdrawal for rehabilitation of regiments long in contact with the enemy. However, the great extension of Sixth Army Group front coincident with loss of other units required the use of these new troops as provided above. They were received without truck transportation and it was necessary to secure ten additional truck companies from ETOUSA to meet their needs in part. (G-4 After Action Report)

229. On 29 December, General Devers presented awards to the following members of the command:

LEGION OF MERIT

Brigadier General Emil Lenzner, Sig., Hq Sixth Army Group

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

Major Wendell B. Sell, CAC, Hq Sixth Army Group
First Lieutenant Ray J. Tadlock, Hq Sixth Army Group

Presentation was made at the Headquarters in VITTEL with appropriate ceremony. (127)

230. The following is quoted from Weekly Intelligence Summary Number 15, dated 30 December 1944:

1. ESTIMATE OF THE ENEMY SITUATION

a. Enemy Activities in Forward Areas, and Units in Contact.

The enemy is showing an aggressively defensive attitude along the entire Sixth US Army Group front. The German Nineteenth Army, although contained in the VOSGES pocket, maintains a defensive but wary attitude and uses every opportunity to keep the initiative. The German First Army has used the time made available to it by reorganizing and refitting its worn units behind the strong defensive positions of the SIEGFRIED Line. The area behind the RHINE from BASLE to KARLSRUHE is apparently under command of HIMMLER himself in his capacity as Commander, UPPER RHINE.

In the VOSGES pocket, eight divisional formations control approximately 15,000 combat effectives. Two divisions (716 and 159 VG) have been out of contact for sufficient time to have been refitted with the replacements coming into this area from across the RHINE. Tanks have also been noted, with an increase in Jagdpanzers. The relatively short interior lines of communications permits the enemy to mass his forces with extreme rapidity to meet attempted attacks by our forces. His position in the plain below the high slopes of the mountains and in the dense HARTH forest area make his intentions difficult to discern, with the possibility of regrouping and attacking in any sector always a threat.

Along the US Seventh Army northern front, elements of nine divisions are still in contact. The equivalent effective strength amounts to approximately 13,000 in infantry troops. The total armored vehicles, including tanks and SP guns, available in the area are now estimated at 125. The refitting of 17 SS, 25 PG and 21 Panzer Divisions should now have progressed to the point where these units may be considered good in combat effectiveness. The enemy shows no sign of retreating, but on the contrary is quick to occupy all ground relinquished by Allied forces. His artillery positions have increased in number, both

forward of and behind the SIEGFRIED Line. There is continued evidence of bridgebuilding and large scale movements directly behind the front. The enemy's intentions in this area are definitely aggressive, if only for the purpose of preventing withdrawal of Allied forces from this front to the EIFEL sector.

b. Enemy Reserves.

There are at least five divisions in reserve in the area directly fed by the KAISERSLAUTERN-HOMBURG lines. 17 SS, 25 PG, and 36 Infantry Divisions have been rebuilding for a period of some two weeks. 21 Panzer has not been identified in its former sector for a week and has undoubtedly moved back into a reserve position. The 553 VG has, according to PW's, left its former position in the line near KARLSRUHE and is assumed to have moved into the general assembly area behind ZWEIBRUCKEN and PIRMASENS for further refitting. Of the candidates from NORWAY (710 Inf, 2 Mtn, 6 SS Mtn), only 710 Infantry and 6 SS Mountain are definitely known to have begun travelling. The terrain in the area favors the employment of a mountain division, but no solid identifications have as yet been made. The 216th Infantry Division is still carried as being responsible for a sector of the SIEGFRIED Line near KARLSRUHE. The 405 and 415 Administrative Divisions are known by document to be controlling the miscellaneous units in the defensive positions behind the RHINE. The presence of some staff or corps size seems necessary for supervision of the relatively quiet but dangerous RHINE sector north of the pocket.

c. Capabilities.

The following capabilities remain open to the enemy:

(1) Attack on the axis HOMBURG-SARREBOURG with present forces augmented by an estimated three to five low calibre divisions.

Discussion:

Capability (1) is favored. The aggressive defense, as discussed above, the build up in the area, the heavy rail activity, the time elapsed permitting refitting, and the total number of troops definitely make it possible. The strategic advantages of forcing the commitment of the Seventh Army's forces at this time when the enemy cannot risk weakening his own front further by sending troops to the EIFEL sector are apparent. Should the enemy succeed in reaching SARREBOURG, the withdrawal of Allied forces from hard won territory between the VOSGES and the RHINE north of STRASBOURG might become necessary. The morale factor alone in such an eventuality would be considerable for the enemy, without considering the delay to the Allied plans for advancing into Germany.

(2) A rapid shift of forces from north to south within the VOSGES pocket for attack on the axis MULHOUSE-BELFORT, reinforcements being available from the Black Forest.

Discussion:

Capability (2) would be executed only in conjunction with capability (1), and at the period when the main attack in the SAAR area had progressed to a noticeable extent. The purpose in this case would be to force employment of all possible Allied reinforcements in the VOSGES thereby preventing their use in the SAAR area.

(3) A limited attack across the RHINE with STRASBOURG as the objective.

Discussion:

Capability (3) is considered in the same light as capability (2).

(4) Aggressive defense along the entire Sixth US Army Group front, using the reserves for commitment on the EIFEL sector.

Discussion:

Capability (4) is not favored. The risk that the Allies might release troops from this front to reinforce the EIFEL counterattack will force the enemy to take aggressive action against the Seventh Army. Furthermore, for the reasons given in capability (1) above, the enemy cannot remain inactive in this area.

231. Shortly past noon 30 December a telephone message was received from General Whitely, Deputy G-3, SHAEF. He said that General Juin, Chief of Staff of National Defense of France, was most anxious that the city of STRASBOURG be held against the growing enemy threat in that area and had offered to place three F.F.I. divisions at the disposal of Sixth Army Group to assist in its defense. A local conference was held to consider this proposal and General Devers decided to send inspection teams from his headquarters to PARIS to ascertain the condition and combat value of these divisions which were said to be equipped with German materiel. The inspection teams left for PARIS the following day. A careful estimate of the situation on the Sixth Army Group front was prepared during the night of 30 December and dispatched to General Eisenhower the next morning. A paraphrased version follows:

TO FOR ACTION: SHAEF MAIN FOR EISENHOWER

FROM : SIXTH ARMY GROUP 31 December 1944

The following is my current estimate of the situation after examination of conditions on this front and detailed consultation with Generals PATCH and DE LATTRE.

Of the 10 enemy Divisions on the **SAAR** front, 7 Infantry Divisions are actively in the line with 3 Armored Divisions, lately refitted, in reserve. The strength totals approximately 35,000 Infantry effectives, with fighting value estimated as good to fair.

From the COLMAR pocket to KARLSRUHE, the RHINE is defended by miscellaneous fortress battalions. The suspected presence of a major unit in this sector not yet confirmed.

8 divisional formations in the COLMAR pocket comprise approximately 15,000 Infantry effectives, fighting value considered good. Enemy intentions continue aggressive, with maintenance of strength observed in SELESTAT-COLMAR area.

Enemy capabilities consist of the following:

(1) Attack on axis HOMBURG-SARREBOURG with present force augmented by estimated 3 to 5 Divisions of low calibre.

(2) Rapid shift of forces from north to south in COLMAR pocket for attack on axis MULHOUSE-BELFORT, reinforcments being secured from BLACK FOREST.

(3) Limited objective attack across RHINE to capture STRASBOURG.

(4) Defense along the Sixth US Army Group front, dispatching reserves to central front.

The most dangerous threat is capability (1) with strong possibility that either (1) and (2) or (1) and (3) may be executed simultaneously.

The First French Army is short approximately 8,000 Infantry replacements, is composed largely of colonial troops who present a serious morale problem due to shortage of Officers with experience in handling colonial troops, and is badly in need of complete re-fitting and re-training. To bolster this Army I am leaving the 3rd US Inf Div with it for the time being and have attached an Inf Regt of 1 of the new Divisions to this Division for experience and training. I am withdrawing 2 DB from First French Army and in the next few days propose to place it behind the northwest flank.

The 5 experienced Inf Divs in Seventh Army are deployed facing the North, each occupying a frontage of from 10 to 15 miles. These Divisions are short approximately 9,000 Infantry and are in need of re-fitting and re-training. Although the need for replacements is compelling and immediate, none have been allotted for the month of Jan. Infantry Regiments of 42nd, 63rd, and 70th Divisions are being given intensive training while at the

same time being employed on protection of the RHINE and organization of the ground. These regiments are short all basics and are insufficiently trained for full scale combat operations. The 36th Div and 12th Armd Div are assembled in SHAEF Reserve west of the VOSGES and 1 Combat command of 14th Armd Div is in reserve behind the XV Corps. The remainder of the 14th Armd Div is in reserve in rear of the VI Corps.

While the situation with respect to general reserves is satisfactory for the moment in the First French Army, the same situation does not obtain in the Seventh Army. The rapid movements and regrouping required of Seventh Army by the great extension of front, coupled with the loss of the 87th Inf, 36th Inf and 12 Armd Divs, have naturally brought about a lack of cohesion that can be corrected only after all movements have been completed and troops and installations are settled in their proper places. This will of necessity take time. These movements and over extension have made it impossible for PATCH to assemble appropriate reserves west of the VOSGES as yet.

Work of organizing the entire area for defense in great depth is progressing satisfactorily and every effort is being made to pinch out an Infantry Division as general reserve and place it west of the VOSGES where it will be suitably disposed to meet an attack against XV Corps. I am convinced, after personally examining the problems confronting PATCH, that it will take approximately 2 weeks to accomplish this if he is to prepare any semblance of defenses in the ALSACE Plain. When the French Army has completed its program of refitting and retraining sufficiently, I hope to be able to withdraw the 3rd Div and return it to PATCH, but this will not be possible within the next 6 weeks, in my opinion.

In view of the very definite threat that has developed on the front of the XV Corps, I must point out the necessity for leaving the Divisions currently earmarked for SHAEF Reserve in this area at least until this threat disappears, or until PATCH is able to constitute a suitable general reserve on the north flank, whichever is sooner.

Sixth Army Group is responsible for a frontage of about 205 miles along the Franco-Italian border in addition to the immediate frontage of about 270 miles which is divided approximately equally between the 2 Armies. With the withdrawal of 12th Armd and 36th Inf Divs, the immediate frontage must be held by 11 weak infantry divs and 4 armd divs, supplemented by 9 untrained Infantry regiments. All general and local reserves must be furnished by these units. The Franco-Italian border is not backed by any general reserve and is weakly held throughout its length, which demands of necessity that reasonably strong and highly mobile reserves be held available on my immediate front for movement to meet any threat from that direction to our Line of Communications.

In view of the excellent avenue of attack along the axis HOMBURG-SARREBOURG, which definitely threatens lines of communications of Seventh Army leading through the VOSGES, and the very serious over-extension of my front, especially on the north, it is essential that strong reserves be available behind the XV Corps so long as the danger of enemy attack on this axis is present. If the 36th Div and 12th Armd Div are withdrawn before the necessary general reserves are created and complete organization of the ground in this area is effected, the integrity of the main battle position may be seriously jeopardized.

I will be grateful for your views in regard to the above.

232. Also on 31 December the following message was sent to SHAEF by General Devers:

TO FOR ACTION: SHAEF

FROM : SIXTH ARMY GROUP 31 December 1944

I have concluded after comprehensive study of the factors involved, that in order to maintain the integrity of the defense of the Northern part of Sixth Army Group area of responsibility and to insure the protection of the Twelfth Army Group's right flank while it is conducting the counter offensive, all Forces east of the MOSELLE must be under a single command.

In order to accomplish this I recommend that a Corps of 1 Armored and 2 Infantry Divisions together with the necessary supporting and service troops, a list of which is being forwarded by Officer Courier, be passed to the control of Sixth Army Group immediately and that the boundary between Twelfth Army Group and Sixth Army Group be changed to the general line ST DIZIER-BAR LE DUC-CONFLANS-THIONVILLE, thence Northeast along the MOSELLE River.

It is further recommended that a suitable portion of Twelfth Army Group stocks of supplies, installations and other logistical facilities in the area be turned over to Sixth Army Group for the maintenance and supply of the additional forces passing to Sixth Army Group control.

An estimate of the additional Communication Zone troops required to meet this additional commitment will be submitted to COMZONE ETOUSA by CG SOLOC with whom this proposal has been discussed in detail at this Headquarters.

I consider this entire matter of paramount importance and request that you give it urgent consideration.

Copy of this is also being forwarded by Officer Courier.

No reply to this message was received.

233. During the period 21-31 December, Seventh Army and First French Army regrouped, organized defensive positions, patrolled and deployed their forces in depth. (G-3 After Action Report)

234. In addition to the half dozen paragraphs dealing with G-4 activities which are dispersed through this chapter in accordance with the dates involved it will be of interest and value to review briefly certain aspects of these activities as described in the G-4 After Action Report for December as follows:

<u>Transportation</u>

1. Rail.

a. The rapid advance of Seventh Army during November outran the railways to an alarming extent. Truck hauls from railheads in the Luneville area for distances as much as 50 to 75 miles were necessary. Removal of track between Luneville and Sarrebourg and damage to a tunnel east of Sarrebourg placed formidable obstructions in the way of the rehabilitation of the Luneville-Sarrebourg-Saverne line to Haguenau and Strasbourg. However, by dint of tremendous exertion this line was opened for traffic on 21st and 20th December respectively.

b. At the same time work was continued on the other railway lines in accordance with the Railway Plan of 30 October 1944. Formidable demolitions existed upon these lines. The entire month was spent advancing the railhead on the Belfort line from Aillervillers through Lure to Champagney and on the St. Die line opening it for traffic to Bruyeres. Tunnels and other demolitions were under repair as the month ended.

c. Movements of tonnage to the railheads proceeded in accordance with allocations made at periodic POM meetings. Shortages of motive power, disruption of communications, lack of sufficient operating personnel, difficulties with water, and toward the end of the month freezing weather had their effect in limiting service. By continuous efforts, however, it was possible to keep supply rolling so that the Armies were able to continue to live and fight.

d. Passage to the defensive revived the importance of the Epinal-St. Die-Strasbourg railway line. Toward the end of the month this line was changed to first priority by the Army Group and all available troops were placed upon this line of communication to open it through the mountains for the support of the Armies fighting on the northern side of the Colmar pocket.

e. During the month the 1st DMI was moved from the front of the First French Army to southwest France and almost immediately had to be recalled to assist in the defense of the First French Army sector in the Vosges Mountains. This movement by rail and

motor covered 738 miles, one of the longest yet made in Europe by our forces.

2. Highway

a. The extended lines of communication brought about by the rapid advance of the Armies and the difficulties imposed by the Vosges Mountains produced a critical problem in highway transportation. At the request of 6th Army Group, ten additional truck companies were allocated from ETOUSA to the 6th Army Group for service with Seventh Army. By this means it was possible to move the supplies long distances from railheads to the point of use without any serious shortages occuring.

b. Nine new Infantry Regiments belonging to three newly assigned Divisions were received without any means of truck transportation. Trucks were loaned from the already scanty supply in the hands of Seventh Army and the Regiments, placed immediately into the line, were supplied by this means.

3. Service Troops

a. In the early part of December a study of the French truck situation, both in Marseille and the First French Army area, revealed that there was not sufficient personnel on hand to permit French trucks to operate on a 24-hour basis. It was determined that generally French truck units were operating at approximately half strength and that if the T/O strength was available they could operate the trucks full time. The First French Army was directed to bring all French truck units to full T/O strength.

b. During the early part of December action was taken on a letter from the Commanding General, First French Army requesting modification of the distribution of French service units between Army and Base Section. A study was made by this Headquarters, and a re-allocation was published on 18 December 1944.

c. During the month additional combat troops were attached to 6th Army Group, and the requirements for supporting service units were submitted to SHAEF.

d. At a meeting held 27 December at SHAEF, where the Army Groups were represented, needs for service units for the first five months of 1945 were examined for the entire Theater. Allocations, based on the comparative strengths of the Army Groups, resulted in the assignment of additional service units to 6th Army Group. This gave the Army Group a proper quantity of supporting troops for the first time.

4. Status of Supply

a. When the 6th Army Group forces were ordered to the defen-

sive, emphasis was immediately placed on the supply of fortification materials. This Headquarters ascertained its need, allocated stocks available between the Armies and requested the Southern Line of Communication to take action to secure additional stocks required from the Communication Zone, ETOUSA.

235. Extracts from the G-1 After Action Report for December are given below:

	U.S. FORCES	FRENCH FORCES	TOTAL
Killed.	1,619	1,820	3,439
Wounded	8,328	8,884	17,212
Missing	1,833	1,073	2,906
Captured.	23		23
Total Battle Casualties	11,803	11,777	23,580
Non-Battle Casualties including Sick (Hospitalized).	15,473	21,339	36,812
Total Casualties.	27,276	33,116	60,392
Sick and Wounded returned to Units.	11,717	7,779	19,496
Balance (Loss for the Month). . . .	15,559	25,337	40,896
Reinforcements received	7,476	19,624	27,100
Balance - Remaining Deficiency for the Month.	8,083	5,713	13,796
T/O Strength of Command	287,729	263,184	550,913
Assigned Strength	274,395	322,157	596,552
Actual Strength	262,419	297,119	559,538
Infantry Shortage	10,699	7,329	18,028
Prisoners of War Captured during the Month.	11,933	4,604	16,537
Prisoners of War Captured (Cumulative)	72,573	75,309	147,882

236. As of 31 December, twenty-four G-5 detachments were operating efficiently in the Army Group area. The first Military Government detachment under Sixth Army Group to enter Germany did so in the last week of December, 1944. A brief description of the attitude of civilians in the area is quoted as follows:

6. PUBLIC RELATIONS.

In general, the relationship between the French population and the Allied soldiers remains satisfactory.

Despite some reports of the general indifference and undemonstrative attitude of the populace, it continues to appear evident that there is a definite pro-Allied feeling throughout the SIXAG area.

The fact that most of the people in Alsace speak German has caused them in a few cases to be distrusted by misinformed American soldiers. "No offense could be more painful to an Alsatian," claims a report from the Securite Militaire (see Appendix "G"), "than to consider him as a German." To back up this statement, the report from the Securite Militaire list approximately half a dozen reasons why there is a great deal of anti-German feeling among the people of Alsace and Lorraine--reasons which extend from the fact that the inhabitants were forced to display Hitler's picture in their homes to the conscripting of young Frenchmen for labor in Germany.

And not to be forgotten is another important reason for the lack of exuberant friendliness; the never ceasing fear under which the population lives that the Germans, fanatically fighting but a few miles to the east, might possibly come back again. (128)